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FOREWORD

It has been thought happy that the following notes of addresses by our late beloved brother, Russell Besley, should be published together. In addition to the definite edification of the reader, they may serve as a happy remembrance of our brother's ministry. Since there is no apparent sequence in the subjects of the addresses, the order of publication has been that of their date, save in respect of the one gospel address, which is placed at the end of the book.

May the Lord be pleased yet further to bless the ministry of our brother by this means to the help and encouragement of many, and to Him be all the praise.

M. W. Biggs.

Enfield.

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MINISTRY

I

TREES OF THE LORD'S PLANTING

1 Kings iv. 29 to end ; Matt. xv. 13 ; 1 Cor. iii. 9

I think it is clear that the Lord Jesus regards us, and indeed all the people of God, as planted in the earth, and in the presence of the presumptuous religious profession the Lord makes this reply, "Every plant which my heavenly Father has not planted shall be rooted up."

I do not propose, beloved brethren, to refer now to those of whom the Lord said, "Let them alone, they be blind leaders of the blind," but I want to say a word with reference to ourselves as trees of the Lord's planting. Paul's word to the Corinthians makes it clear that the saints are regarded as the Lord's husbandry, and it is recorded of king Solomon that he spake of trees from the cedar in Lebanon to the hyssop which springeth out of the wall ; and I am sure that the Lord Jesus, the greater than Solomon, speaks of all the trees. He speaks about you, and He has something to say about each one. Great as Solomon was, he was compelled to give place to the One who is greater ;

and we know the One who is the greater than Solomon. How great He is ! If Solomon's wisdom was great, how infinitely great is the wisdom of Christ ! The universe in the coming day will rejoice in the infinite wisdom of the greater than Solomon ; and if Solomon spake of all the trees from the cedar to the hyssop, the Lord Jesus speaks as a greater than Solomon of all the trees of the Father's planting.

Solomon spake from the top downwards, but I think we shall have to speak from the bottom upwards. A wonderful thing to be a hyssop ! Fruit of having been brought in by the infinite grace of God. Are we marked by lowliness ? Is the grace that moved in our hearts when we were first brought to a sense of need, the same lowliness, carried along with us ? It should be ! I suppose the hyssop is the symbol of lowliness.

While speaking of these various figures, it is not to suggest that one should be a hyssop and another should be a cedar. God's intention is that every characteristic should be found in each of us. Are we lowly in spirit ? Are we easily handled ? A bunch of hyssop—how easily handled ! For divine use, that is what we all should be, and the Lord would appeal to us that we might be easily handled. When divine hands touch us in an unexpected way, I do not know what your experience is, but I have felt that one is not always easily handled ; but if the Lord is going to make use of us He

must have us at His disposal as easily handled as the hyssop.

Then scripture speaks of the willow by the brook. There should be the element of a willow in us all. The tree planted by the rivers of water. Is it not necessary that we should inquire what are our sources of supply? Are they spiritual, or are they of the flesh? If we are found having the characteristics that scripture here associates with the willow, we shall be by the water-brooks. It is to show that our supplies are in the Spirit. Oh, that we had our source of supply more truly in the Spirit! How mighty the saints become when they are but willows by the brook. The Lord Jesus, when He was here, acted by the power of the Spirit, so we are to be as willows by the water. How barren we become if we are not by the water, if we act without the Spirit! It is a marvellous thing that one Person of the Godhead has come so within our reach and is available for us—the Spirit of God. "If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body." It is by the Spirit of God being available in us. Oh, that there may be with us the precious characteristic of the willows by the water!

Scripture speaks of all the trees, and we must not overlook any. There is the myrtle tree—a tree that is evergreen no matter what the conditions. Its leaves are shed to give place to others, but it is never barren and without them; and the Lord would have us evergreen trees.

Like Jacob, we must know the heat and the cold. The world is a withering place and the power of the enemy ready to reduce us, so we must be evergreen. How lovely it is to see the saints always fresh. I know some that seem never to change, whatever the situation. I do not know how you feel, but I have a great desire to have the element of the myrtle tree. It says, " Instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree." Not only in the reading or the prayer meeting, but in the house or the daily round of our calling, we are to have the grace and the characteristics of the myrtle tree. The Lord when here—that holy Man out of heaven —ever bore that precious characteristic wherever He was or whatever the circumstances in which He was placed. He was always the same. Indeed, the illustrious title that was His, and is His in Diety, is " The Same ". He is also spoken of as " the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."

Having this wonderful characteristic of the evergreen, we may perhaps arrive at what it is to be a palm tree. One of the characteristics of the palm tree is flourishing. It is delightful to see the brethren flourishing ! I put the question to you, Are you flourishing ? Flourishing arises from what is within, not what is without. What about your heart ? What about the depth of your soul ? The Lord sees when we do not flourish. We are to flourish so as to be able to stand up with head rising heaven-

wards in a dignified way. Man is appearing in degenerate characteristics : he is not dignified—no one can question it. The great aim of the world is for place and power and wealth, but the saints of God are to rise up heavenwards as dignified. What a majesty there was with Christ ! There is nothing on this earth to compare with it. No human heart can set it forth, and we are to be of Him and like Him —flourishing. We should go from strength to strength.

Looking back over the years past, are we flourishing ? Have we acquired a greater knowledge of Christ and a greater knowledge of God ? The most marvellous knowledge that can come within the reach of a creature is the knowledge of God, and by it we shall flourish and appear to the world as palm trees—that is, as to moral features. We may not be flourishing as to material circumstances, but morally we should be marked by dignity and should also flourish. I suppose that the testimony of divine grace and the testimony of the church together form the most marvellous testimony that the universe can ever know, and it is within our reach. God has called us to have part in it as palm trees. May the Lord give it to us, so that at the very end we may be in touch with the testimony and in relation to it stand together. The Lord help us to maintain what is of God, to stand at the very close in relation to a testimony that is morally great

and marvellous and the most dignified and majestic that the universe will ever see.

That brings us to the consideration of the oak tree. We are not to move in a spasmodic way. My dear brethren, it will not do for me to be stable last week and not this week ; there must be stability with us. There are two elements that mark the oak—stability and permanence. Let me cite one. You will remember at the close of the book of Joshua (xxiv. 26), Joshua wrote in the book of the law and set up a stone by the oak tree ; as though to show that it must abide ; and we must abide. I am sure you have a desire to be marked by stability, so that God can rely upon you. He put the whole weight of His glory on the Lord Jesus with absolute security. Do we not desire, as trees of the heavenly Father's planting, to be marked by what is permanent and stable, not to be carried about by every wind that blows ? There is great need for this. The testimony moves on, and we are permitted to be identified with it. Are we marked by stability, or are we carried about by every new voice ? No one will be marked by stability but those who are under the sway of the Lord's mighty voice. The Lord speaks to us. It may be He will call you along. Deep, searching soul exercises may be yours, but the Lord will speak. There is no mistaking when He speaks, and as governed by that voice we are as oak trees, marked by stability. There is great need

for this when one and another is forsaking the path and turning aside. Do not be associated with those who are damaging the saints, but be marked by stability for God and for Christ. Oh, for the character of the oak tree! These are the characteristics that mark the oak tree among the trees of the Lord's planting.

Now I want to say a word with regard to the fig tree. There are two remarkable characteristics of a fig tree as given in scripture. The one is sweetness. If you recall the allegory in the book of Judges, chapter ix, verses 8–15, when the trees were conversing together, in verse 11 the fig is marked by sweetness. Not the mere sweetness of human nature, but sweetness that is after the order of the holy heavenly Man ; and where there is this sweetness among the saints, there is healing power. The fruit of the fig tree is given in scripture as indicating the power of healing, especially as identified with the deep exercise of the saints. You will remember that Hezekiah was sick and the prophet brought a cake of figs and laid it on the boil and he was cured. Many brethren are sick and many for whom we mourn. How can we heal them ? Only by bringing in the holy sweetness of Christ. Deep exercise has to know its effective working with ourselves ; then the healing element suggested in the figs is brought in, and Hezekiah, the king, was healed. How much healing is needed !

Then there is the olive tree. The olive tree

seems to suggest spiritual power. Beloved, I put it to you, do you know what it is to be marked by spiritual power? It is a power by which we can reach experimentally what it is to be "risen with Christ". I do not ask you if you have the doctrine of this glorious privilege in your mind; I suppose you hold the doctrine of the death and resurrection of Christ. But do you live in the life of the heavenly Man, do we know what this is, to live in the life of a risen Christ? Only in the power of the Spirit can this be, and this, I think, is the force of the olive tree. When Noah let loose the dove, she came back with an olive branch in her mouth. We speak sometimes of walking along here in the valley of the shadow of death; we are not without our tears and sorrow; but the Man who was in death is on the throne, in the majesty of the heavens, and we are going home to be with Him ere long. Let us hold this in our souls in spiritual vigour, for the olive tree seems to set forth in type *spiritual power*. I do delight to think of the saints as having spiritual power. We have the Spirit of God. We have Him, and He is with us. He dwells in the assembly. It is delightful to mark a brother as having spiritual power. This is the olive tree, and the Lord would help us that as the days grow darker we may have an increase of spiritual power. Perhaps one thing we need much is to give place to the Spirit of God. I am sure the Lord would appeal to us thus.

You may have noticed in your meditations that the first tree alluded to in scripture is a fruit-bearing tree, and the last tree is fruit-bearing. God would have us possessing the character of the vine as bearing fruit for Him —that of being able to offer something for the Lord, something for Him. It is a great thing if I am permitted to offer something for Him. The Lord came looking for fruit. Where do you think He is going to look for it? He is looking for it from you and from me. What a lovely sight a local assembly is if these wonderful fruits are seen there! Oh, for the character of the vine until He comes!

That brings us to the close, for the accumulation of these things is the cedar tree. Are we as cedar trees? There is something there that no schools or universities can give. It is true greatness in men. God is going to beautify heavenly places with men who have the character of cedars. May they increase for His Name's sake. Amen.

Croydon

II

WAITING UPON GOD

Isaiah lxiv. 4 (New Translation)

What I had in mind in reading this passage was to try and say a word to you, beloved brethren, with regard to the matter of waiting upon God. I believe that it is distinct from prayer, although intimately connected with it. That is to say, you might have prayer without waiting upon God. There is great blessing accruing to those who wait upon God. I have no doubt every one here is accustomed to pray, for there is no more delightful occupation for a believer than praying, unless it be praising, but the one is often the outcome of the other. To have the favour of being allowed to speak to God, and speak to the Lord in heaven, is greatly valued, I am sure, by every one.

Prayer fortifies a believer as having to meet the influences of the world, and of his own heart, but what I have very much before me now is the experience of *waiting upon God*. Evidently there are wonderful things—things that eye has not seen nor ear heard, nor that have entered into the heart of man—which God has prepared for those that *wait* for Him. The Apostle in the epistle to the Corinthians gives a beautiful touch, as showing that those

that wait upon God are those that love Him. I believe that all the persons whom God has taken up from the beginning have been accustomed to wait upon God, and I raise the inquiry as to whether we are accustomed to wait upon God. I suppose we have all, in varying measure, had the experience that we have spoken to God about a matter, and have received no reply. What are you going to do? Are you going to abandon the pursuit or are you going to wait upon God? The waiting process tests us much, but it is a most delightful experience to wait on God, with the sure and certain sense in your souls that none ever waited on God in vain. It is part of our education for the realm in which we are to dwell presently, that we should wait on God. I think Noah stands out as one who waited on God. Noah recoiled from the condition of things in the earth where he lived, and he took an opposite course; he was a righteous man, and God regarded him as such; and the time came when God told him that the end of all flesh had come before Him. Now, God frequently indicates what He is about to do before He does it, and Noah had to learn to wait on God as to what He was about to do. As waiting upon God you rejoice your heart in the sense that you are in His confidence, that you have a secret with heaven. It is a wonderful experience to be in the secret of God. Noah enjoyed that, and as he built the Ark, during

the long period that elapsed while it was preparing, Noah was waiting upon God. Day by day he would no doubt commune with God as he waited upon Him. And even after Noah was put in the Ark, and the door was shut by the hand of God, he had to wait. I am perfectly certain that Noah acquired, as the outcome of waiting on God, a moral greatness which distinguished him above the whole generation in which he lived.

Then one might refer to Abraham. The God of glory appeared to him, as distinct from Noah. The God of glory appeared to him in a land of idolatry, and He called him to come out of country, kindred, and father's house, and we are told that he went out, not knowing whither he went—because he was waiting on God. What did it matter if he did not know whither he was going if he had God to wait upon? He arrived at a knowledge of God through that experience, which I suppose he could not have derived in any other way.

Then, in offering up his son, he was told that the thing was to be done on one of the mountains that " I will tell thee of ", Abraham still further waited upon God, and all through his experiences we find that this thing characterised him (save, alas, with certain lapses) that he waited upon God.

Our place as brought into relation with God, in His family as His children, and in His household, gives us our privilege to wait upon

Him. The thought of waiting upon God far exceeds the idea of making requests to Him, and leaving it there. There may be requests which we make, and which we leave, but that is not waiting upon God. Waiting upon God is that the affections of the heart turn constantly towards Him, ever having in mind what we have spoken to Him about, or that of which He may have spoken to us. It may involve patience, but it is amply rewarded. May I ask whether we as believers, are intimate with heaven? Do we know the gates, the doors? Do we realise that we have been called into holy intimacy with God, not to be so only when we arrive in heaven, but now? Do we understand this? In the world great prices are paid, and great efforts are put forward, in order to be allowed to speak to royal personages. You need pay no price to have to speak to God. It is your rightful place to be near to Him, and to commune with Him continually. Nothing, surely, can be greater in the life of a believer than to be intimate with God, and to know what it is continually to wait upon Him.

I might remind you of others besides Noah and Abraham: of Joseph, of David, and of many others who knew what it was to wait upon God; there were those who through long hours of dreary darkness knew what it was to wait upon God; and I want you to understand that *none* ever waited on God in vain. As surely

as the sun rises in the morning so surely will God answer you if you wait upon Him. But He may keep you waiting, and the process of being kept waiting tests us all, but it educates us greatly. When once you have passed a period of waiting upon God—waiting on and on, and no answer, no apparent issue—the moment will come when the dawn will appear and the light will stream in where it was dark, and God will show you His way.

In the life of Jesus here, perfect though it was, great and Holy One of God as He was, there was this particular element of waiting upon God. Think of the Lord being in Jerusalem; He knew about His Father's business—what great affairs were in His hands. Think of a boy of twelve years old in the temple, the One who was going to bring about the reconciliation of all things, the One who was going to effect atonement, and the One who was going to destroy the power of death and overthrow completely the whole power of evil. Did He not know what was before Him? He says, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" Think of Him going down to Nazareth and waiting. Think of that One turning daily, frequently every day, turning heavenward, and waiting on God. Which is greater—to accomplish great things for God or to enjoy nearness with Him? The Lord valued the holy intercourse which He had with God. So He went down to Nazareth,

and it says He was in subjection to His parents.

I ask you, Are you really in touch with God? Do you know Him? I have found believers in obscurity. One comes to my mind now who lived in a little wooden cottage, who could speak in the most intimate way of having to do with God. Never shall I forget the look that came into her face as she spoke to me. She said, "Do you think God will ever fail me? No," she said, "never." Are we really intimate with God, beloved? Do we know Him? God is working at the present time to bring us *near* to Him. We have become nigh by the blood of Christ; we all have access in the power of one Spirit. But do we know this nearness? Do we know what it is to wait upon God? Oh, it is lovely to get into the company of one who is accustomed to wait on God.

The time came in the life of Jesus, in His precious life, when He came up to the baptism of John. And Luke tells us, "when all the people were baptised . . . that Jesus also being baptised, and praying, the heaven was opened." Jesus was praying, not preaching yet, not raising that voice, which in its power could cause the dead to hear. No, He was waiting, waiting on God—praying. It is a most touching consideration. A lowly, humble man, standing by the water, come up out of the river, standing there. Oh, how precious to heaven, a lonely man standing praying by the

Jordan, what a lovely sight. Waiting on God. What will God do? God opened the heavens, and the Spirit in bodily form as a dove came down and abode upon Him. A manifest representation to all who were there that that Person was approved of heaven. That was the answer. The voice was for His own heart, that He had the place as the beloved Son.

We are missing much, dear brethren, if we do not know what it is to wait—to wait only upon God. You may say to me, "I am in difficulty as to my home; I have to leave the place in which I am living, and I do not know what to do." Well, when you do not know what to do, do nothing, but wait upon God for Him to come in; for certainly He will. What about your family? Are we accustomed to let things drift? Are we as parents accustomed to let our children drift into the world? This will not do, brethren; you and I as parents and heads of households are responsible to wait on God for them. Oh, you say, "It is an impossible case." What? Impossible to whom? Have you never read those words, "With God all things are possible." You say the case is a hopeless one. I challenge that. I ask you solemnly, is any case hopeless when you bring God in? No, there must be this practice of waiting on God, and the Lord Jesus in His lowly, humble life pre-eminently set it forth.

There came the moment of the transfiguration. Jesus went up the mountain knowing

what was coming, for He had alluded to it, and that shows that nothing ever took the Lord by surprise. I have often had a desire that one might be nearer to God so that things might not take one by surprise. I am thinking just now of the coming of the Lord Jesus. I believe that if one could only wait, and wait upon Him, He would give a definite indication that He was coming. Have you any intimation from Him as to whether He is coming? What is your own personal experience with the Lord? Is so great a moment to come without any kind of intimation in the hearts of those who love Him? I question it. When did you ask Him last when He was coming? Just before He ascended they said, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the season, which the Father hath put in his own power." I have a strong impression that there will be those here on the earth who will be in the secret of the fact that the Lord is just about to come. I would like to be among them. I believe there will come into the souls of many of the saints—I do not say all, no doubt it is open to all—there will be an impression in the hearts of believers that the Lord is at hand. That is my impression. I would like to wait upon Him so that we have some indication from Himself that He is about to come. I would love, if it were possible, to be able to put my book down, or leave whatever

I am doing, and just wait, and say, " Lord Jesus, come," and we shall be gone. I am convinced that the Lord would have us wait on Him as to it, for it is at hand. If He comes in the dead of night, remember it is daylight on the other side of the world ; or if darkness, there it will be daylight here. I would love to wake out of sleep and have the sense that the Lord is coming, and so be ready in affection to greet Him. That is what we desire, I am sure, and it will be the outcome of waiting upon Him. How many days do we pass without ever referring to the Lord about the matter at all ? There should not be one day. I went into a brother's house and I noticed a paper on the wall with these words : " Perhaps, to-day." How lovely to be in the household of a brother who, on his knees in quietness with you alone in his room, with his whole soul moved and throbbing with affection and attachment to Christ, says, " Oh, Lord, is it to-day ? " If we wait upon Him we will get some intimation from Him that His coming is imminent.

I was referring to the Lord going up the mountain as knowing that the transfiguration was about to take place, for He had intimated it to the disciples ; and yet, having ascended the mountain, we find Him praying, or waiting on God, and as He prayed—not after He prayed—as He prayed, His countenance was altered and His clothing was also changed.

The fruit of waiting upon God was this transfiguration. It is open to us all to enjoy waiting upon God, and we shall prove how true it is that, " Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard," how He will act for those that wait upon Him. What will God do for those that wait upon Him ?

I pass on, and think of the moment of the Lord's crucifixion, and recall the remarkable words of Psalm xl. in connexion with it, " I waited patiently for Jehovah." Think of that moment on the cross—Jesus nailed to the cross, and abandoned of God, enduring the wrath of God against sin. Think of Him there, waiting, as it says in Psalm xl., " I waited patiently for Jehovah." And He says, " he brought me up out of the pit of destruction, out of the miry clay." Although abandoned, He waited for God to come in, and God brought Him up out of the horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set His feet on a rock, and established His goings, and put a new song in His mouth. Look what an array of things come in now as the outcome of waiting, and waiting patiently upon God. The most magnificent devotion that the universe will ever witness was seen there. It was not only that He prayed to God : He did that, but He waited on Him. You, or I, or any saint at any time or in any place, can never come into such circumstances as those ; and yet here is the eternal witness that God will answer him that waits on Him.

He was heard for His piety ; His inmost feelings clung to God although He was forsaken, and He waited on God ; and the establishment of a universe of glory will be the answer to it.

Beloved brethren, if God is to be known, and if He has revealed Himself to us, it is that we may have the joy of waiting upon Him, and He will never fail us. It is a thing that is called for in a godless world. I say most respectfully to the brethren, merely to offer our prayers is not enough. It is a great thing ; there are Christian households, alas, where prayers are not offered publicly ; but there are others where prayers are offered. But what about this ? Does not the head of the house know what it is to shut himself up alone and wait upon God ? The most dire and awful need that ever arose in any house or family will be met if only we know what it is to wait upon God. The most awful dilemma in which a man was ever plunged shall be solved if we will only learn what it is to wait on God ; and the most distressing church difficulty which we have ever known will be solved if we only know what it is to wait, and wait only upon God.

Manchester

III

THE VOICE OF THE LORD

PSALM xxix.

I WISH to say a word with regard to the voice of the Lord. I suppose that every one here has heard His voice ; it is a voice well known to some, and heard in varying circumstances. But are we prepared to hear it now ?

It is left in the Lord's hands as to what He will say. He has the right to say what He will. There are times when men are not prepared to hear the Lord's voice. That is a sorrowful hour for the believer ; it is a perilous hour for the sinner, with whom the Lord is pleading. The hour will come when every one will hear His voice.

It is the Person at the right hand of God who speaks. His voice must be attended to by every one. " Give unto the Lord, O ye mighty, give unto the Lord glory and strength." The Lord Jesus has a place given of God in the universe, having a right to speak. We must give glory. "Give unto the Lord glory and strength."

The call of those belonging to Him is to be before Him in the spirit of worship.

The psalmist speaks of the Lord's voice being on the waters. This was illustrated in our Lord's life on earth (see Matt. viii. 23–27 and

xiv. 22–33). The waters were beyond the control of skilful navigators. There are times when the elements around are such that no one can adjust them but the Lord. If we cry to Him in a genuine spirit of holy desire we shall hear the Lord's voice on the water. The outcome of what He will do is so to subdue us that we say, "This is God's Son."

I do not know how we feel as to the fact that we have the Lord among us. Sometimes I have an awful dread. You may wonder. But it is a grave and serious matter. For the Lord will see that the place where He is is in moral suitability and accord with what He is. Who is it that speaks in divine power? We are told in Revelation of the angel who set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot upon the earth, and cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth; and when He had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices (Rev. x. 1–3). It is the Lord who speaks.

"The God of glory thundereth." We have to do with God. I desire we might apprehend that we must have to do with God. God having taken us up will never put us down.

We are either the subjects of His beneficent blessing or of His government. God may linger in patience, and work with extraordinary skill in forbearance. But the working of God's government is inevitable. It must be one or the other. So it is in the Psalm, "The God of glory thundereth."

With regard to the Lord's voice, for that He is speaking we cannot doubt and that He is speaking in His assembly. "The voice of the Lord is powerful." The characteristic is that He can give effect to all that He speaks. We should learn that frequently we speak and give no effect to what we speak. But He speaks and can give effect. We should humble ourselves and hearken.

We are sustained for divine pleasure here by the Lord's voice which is *full* of majesty. No one can speak after the King. Never allow anyone to trespass on your notice when the Lord has spoken. The Lord's word is the last word, the final word. Some voice may be raised to cloud an issue. But no one can speak after the King.

"The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars." There are cedars who stand erect in moral glory and majesty according to God, who are like the holy, heavenly Man. But this is brought about by coming down in regard of what we are naturally. There is the strength of cedars. But as regards what is natural, I would solemnly charge anyone who has natural strength that there is a limit to the pride of such trees. "The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars, yea, the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon." It is solemn for anyone to stand against the Lord's will. If the Lord has taken you up, do not resist Him. If we are to be likened to cedars, we must start at the qualities

of the hyssop. All resistance will be broken. Grace lingers, love waits, but the voice of the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon. He will see they do come down. It may be through stricken circumstances or shattered health. The cedar must come down. The Lord takes us in hand that we may be like Him. In Him, in the lowliest circumstances, was holy dignity. In holy humanity, great though He was, He went down, according to the second chapter of Philippians. His thought was to go down (see Phil. ii. 5–8).

" He maketh them also to skip like a calf." When the service has been effectual in bringing us down, it is to bring us to the presence of God. To " skip " would suggest holy movements of holy joy. A " calf " would speak of vigour and of what is young. And the " ox " would be marked by continued patience and perseverance in what it is doing. So what was against before, is now brought into line, as part of the holy rejoicing. The voice of the Lord is doing this, so that the number of those who are according to His mind may be increased. Lebanon and Sirion : the latter is Mount Hermon, that is, what is far away is brought in to take part. It is brought into the presence of God so as to give strength. The one farthest off is brought in for strength. David danced, whereas Michal despised. The Lord's voice would invite us to holy rejoicing before God.

" The voice of the Lord divideth the flames

of fire." The meaning is to be spiritually interpreted that the Lord's voice brings in and ministers a spirit of strict judgment. The higher we go the greater is the sense of evil in us, as persons who belong to the generation of sinful flesh. Self-judgment is needed, not according to my estimate of sin, but according to God's estimate. This sense of sin would lead us to prostration before God.

We are to be righteous, but we are also to be holy. Is there not in the world an earnest longing to evil and unholy corruption? There is need for deep judgment of what sin is in the presence of God, and so the voice of the Lord calls for strict judgment.

"The voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness." This is a region unfruitful and always thirsty. There are some not wholly fruitful, and some who are yielding no fruit for divine pleasure. "Shaketh" means to make fruitful, and this through a region of suffering. So that what is a wilderness becomes fruitful.

"The wilderness of Kadesh" would signify a spirit of murmuring against God. Never allow this spirit of murmuring, beloved brethren. The Lord Jesus suffered more than ever we can suffer, but there was no murmur. Jehovah says He will cause murmuring to cease. Let the mighty voice of the Lord be heard.

"The voice of the Lord maketh the hinds to calve." The voice of the Lord can bring life—spiritual life; the hind speaking of what

has spiritual life—the hind of the morning. If the voice of the Lord be heard and allowed to reverberate, this is so. We complain we are at a low ebb, that there is a lack of freshness. The way for correction is to allow the Lord's voice to be heard. The Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said, "Canst thou mark when the hinds do calve?" The Lord alone can bring in life. Our homes ought to be aglow with spiritual life, and so too the assemblies. Only the Lord can bring it in. This was the Lord's challenge to Job. If the voice is heard as being the voice of the Lord, this will result in spiritual life. *He* speaks, this great and holy Personage.

It is not long before the voice will be heard that gathers us up. Are we ready to see Him face to face? Let us have spiritual life in our homes and assemblies.

"The voice of the Lord discovereth the forests." These were concealed; no human eye could discern what was there. The Lord will lay bare all in view of the moment when I shall be before the judgment seat of Christ. I wish everything cleared so that I can stand before the Lord without fear. The voice of the Lord has spoken that every one may utter glory in His temple.

May the Lord bring us to that, beloved brethren.

Newcastle-on-Tyne

IV

THE EDUCATION OF A SERVANT

1 Kings xix. 11-17; 2 Kings ii. 11

I want to say a word with regard to the education of a servant. I am sure we all desire to serve the Lord, but we must not serve as uneducated, for we should know how it ought to be done. No one should essay to do a thing unless he knows how to do it, and if God has called us to any service He will educate us for it.

There are incidents in the life of this great servant, Elijah, that give certain touches in his education. He appears in the reign of Ahab, king of Israel, as one who stands "in the presence of God". He says, "Before whom I stand", meaning that he was acquainted with the divine presence, and before serving we must be acquainted with the divine presence. Elijah was standing there ready for God to take him up. What holy joy pervades the heart of one who knows what it is to stand in the presence of the Lord! I suppose we all know what it is to be in the presence of God and to be at home there, waiting to do what we are told.

Elijah appears on the platform of this remarkable history as one who stands before the Lord, and he is in line with what God is

doing. What is the use of assuming to serve if we are not in line with what God is doing? How utterly futile is the service unless we are in line! What is God doing where we are at the present time? Those who are standing in the presence of the Lord will know. The Lord delights to take us into His confidence and He will acquaint us with what He is doing if we wait upon Him.

Jehovah had determined to bring famine on the land in order to recall the people who had wandered away from Him; and so near to the Lord was this remarkable man that he could say, "There shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word." Think of being able to speak as though his word was the Lord's word. In public testimony our word should carry the authority and power of the Lord's word, in order to be effective. God supported Elijah and the heavens were shut up for three years and six months. Elijah was a remarkable servant. Not many of us could carry such dignity and honour as he did. I do not know how we should pass through the land if at our word the heavens were closed for three and a half years. Are we great enough to carry that? Elijah was; and in order to further educate His servant the Lord tells him to go to the brook Cherith and abide there. The servant had to learn that every resource would fail but God—a searching education.

When names are given in scripture they are

given with a meaning. We do not always know what they mean, but the name Cherith means " piercing " or " cutting ", and Jehovah intended that this exercise should pierce to the very depths of the prophet's soul, as serving in this great service for the recovery of God's people. Corresponding to public honours there are deep and searching exercises, as you will know, and the Lord allows the one to balance the other. Now Cherith was in a valley. Elijah, with sensitiveness begotten of intimacy with God, would know well what that meant. He had to go *down into a valley* by the brook ; the word used for a brook here is the word used for a brook in a valley. Now there was no evidence of food for the prophet ; but the man of faith knows that if God sends him to a certain place God will sustain him in the place. Ah, what a comfort ! If God has put you in a place, He will sustain you in that place.

God had commanded the ravens to bring him bread and flesh in the morning and the evening. It is remarkable that God should speak of bread, for the first mention of bread in scripture is in relation to man as toiling on account of sin coming in. Elijah would think about that. And flesh would remind him that God had made a covenant with man on the earth, and if God makes a covenant He will be true to it. In the ninth chapter of Genesis God gave man in the renewed earth flesh for food ; and following immediately on the

instructions as to flesh, He made a covenant with Noah. Now Elijah would think of that in the valley beside the brook Cherith. Morning and evening the ravens arrived with bread and flesh. We are not to expect what will carry us beyond a *day*. God intends that we should live by the day, and God will give us what will carry us through one day, and He will also give us what will carry us through one night ; and so on, as long as we have any need. Elijah is to learn that man is in a place where toil came in on account of sin, and yet there God made a covenant, so that God could be relied on. Bread as food for man was the evidence of the *mercy* of God. All God's judgments are tempered with mercy, and Elijah would have to learn that, as subsequent history shows.

" And it came to pass after a while, that the brook dried up." One can just picture the beloved prophet sitting there, day by day, and night by night, watching the stream gradually becoming less, a test as to how God would sustain him and what God would do. He was learning now what his own prophetic word was bringing in for the recovery of the people, for God had famined the land in order to turn a wandering people to Himself, and the prophet had to taste what the people were going through. If one is to minister a word to the people of God, searching in its character, or piercing, or admonitory, then behind the scenes, unknown to anyone, the servant has *to*

taste that himself. Unless we are prepared to go through with it to the end, our service is not effective. " It came to pass," it says, " that the brook dried up." And then the word comes. How wonderful to wait for God's word ! Those who know what it is to live with God, know that He can be relied upon. You know that if God says a thing, with absolute certainty He will do it. We *are relying on it* ; we know that God is going to see us through, through to the end, into eternal glory. Whether it be a matter of what is temporal or what is spiritual, God can be relied upon, and He has put all things into the hands of the Son. What hands to administer all things !

Well now, the word comes to the prophet, " Arise, get thee to Zarephath. . . . I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee." There is no word, or question from the prophet—not a word ! Think of a man who had shut up the heavens by his word, having to go to a place and be sustained by a widow ! God knows what He is doing. The elements of flesh need to be touched, to the end that we may recoil from them and forsake them. Such is our education. You will know well enough that Zarephath means a " crucible " ; and God puts His people in a crucible. What for ? To purge away the dross that what He is Himself may shine in us.

With dignified patience Elijah moves off to Zarephath, and he meets the widow. What a

state ! She has not even a cake for him. She has a little meal and a little oil, just enough to make a cake for her child and herself and then to die. Yet God has sent him there ; the crucible is placed on the fire and there is great testing. The prophet accepts it and he says, " Make me thereof a little cake first ". And then he gives the word, " The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail ". It will go right through until the test is over. He had got that from God, and the barrel of meal did not waste and the cruse of oil did not fail. God has given us in Christ and the Spirit, enough to carry us through in the full strength of manhood according to God, and we shall have that to the end.

The prophet has to learn yet something more. The widow's boy dies, and she began to be afraid that her sin was going to be brought to light. The prophet says nothing about it. That is not the question in hand. What about God's son ? I am speaking now of Israel as God's son. " When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt " (Hosea xi. 1). Has God lost him, has death come in there ? Instead of a holy people with emotions stirred towards Jehovah, there is a people worshipping Baal and sacrificing to him. God has lost His son ! Israel is no longer responsive in affection to Jehovah. The prophet has to learn the bitterness of this as part of his education, and the pain of it is, that

the widow implies that his coming to the house is the occasion of the death of the child.

But Elijah has a secret, and so have we. If you examine the New Translation you will find that Elijah lived in *an upper room*, meaning that he lived in a region in touch with heaven, spiritually above the level of the earth. He lived up there. Let me affectionately inquire, Have we an upper room? Are we living near to God? Are we intimate with God? I find in moving about that there are those who have. No sooner are they on their knees than you find that they are intimate with God; the way they speak to Him reveals that He is One that is well known. That is the upper room. I would ask the young people, Are you accustomed to pray? Do you know the blessedness of drawing near to the Lord and speaking to Him?

Now Elijah can take up this exercise into the upper room; he has a *place of rest* in the upper room. He has a bed up there. Have we a place of rest in the upper room? We not only pray there, but do we *rest* there? It is marvellous to see the quiet grace of many of the people of God in a world of turmoil and difficulty. Ah, they have a place of rest in the upper room! They can rest there with the Lord. And so Elijah took the little dead boy and put him in his bed, and he *measured* himself—the word means that—he measured himself upon the little dead boy, meaning that he brought

himself to feel what that was—a dead child, indeed a dead son. How God, to speak reverently, was feeling this with regard to Israel! "The son" that He brought out of Egypt, Israel, was lost to Him, dead, as it were, and there was no response. That servant Elijah, through whom recovery is coming in, is being educated to feel this with God, and he cries to the Lord in a most beautiful way, "Let this child's *soul* come into him again." A very lovely word! It is not the same thought as his spirit; it is his soul. What God looked for in His people was feeling, and what God looks for in us are feelings—deep, reverent, holy, affectionate feelings; and the soul in a person is connected with *feelings*, emotions. So the child's soul was brought into him, teaching the prophet that God was going to bring back feelings in His people towards Himself. The child is brought back and given to his mother, and Elijah is given to witness what God felt when the people were recovered to Him. *How* He would feel it, and God does feel things. There in that holy place on high where God dwells in light unapproachable there is a heart that feels with infinite love; that is the revelation—precious theme!

The education is proceeding, and I pass on. Elijah comes to the moment when he is going to take up the difficult public service of overthrowing the enemy and recovering the people of God. As he comes out now, he has great

and holy dignity about him. He meets Obadiah, and he tells Obadiah to go and tell Ahab that " Elijah is here." Think of the power of the man who is with God. There ought to be power with the people of God, and there is no reason why there should not be, if our education is proceeding and we are living in the presence of God. Elijah insists on what he said. Obadiah questions it, but Elijah insists on it. He says, " Go tell thy lord, Behold Elijah is here." Ahab came to him, and when he saw him he saluted him with the words, " Art thou he that troubleth Israel ? " " No," says Elijah, " but thou and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord ; and thou hast followed Baalim." Then Elijah says, " Gather to me all Israel unto Mount Carmel ". And he did it. What power a servant of God may have. Have we not witnessed it ? What is there behind the man ? How dare anyone say of such a servant that God has not raised him up ? A man that can bring in a word of power from God and assemble the people, that man is with God, and he is a man to be respected.

And Ahab gathered together all Israel to Mount Carmel. It must have been a marvellous sight to see this host gathered to Mount Carmel, and the priests of Baal assembling there. The passage is well known, and the method employed by Elijah to unmask the deceit of the enemy. We may count on God

to unmask things in His own time. He has done it often and He will yet do it again.

So the prophets of Baal select their victim, but they are found to be wholly incapable of proving that of which they speak, so that their claim is publicly known to be a lie. Then Elijah goes forward, and he selects the victim and calls upon God, and God answers him. The people move in obedience seeing that Jehovah is there, showing His power towards them, for He answered by fire from heaven. A witness to the presence and power of God !

Now the beloved servant is in the height of power publicly, and God is going to send rain on the earth. *God* is going to do it now. " I will send rain," He says. The prophet goes up to the top of Carmel, puts his head between his knees, and he prays, and waits upon God. But God tests him. The testing may be severe, but it is an indication from God that there is strength, and He knows it : He delights in the endurance of the saints. Elijah prays seven times, and his servant goes to look towards the sea, but there is no answer. I do not know anything more testing than to wait on God and have no answer ; but we must go on. God will give us an answer even if He says " No ". A child was once asked if her prayers were answered, and she said that they were always answered. " But you asked God to give you something and He did not do it ". But she said, " God said ' No ! ' " Are we prepared

to hear Him say "No"? Now Elijah went on; he was quite sure of his ground. The seventh time the servant came back and he said, "There ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand". Elijah knew what that meant, God had heard his prayer and rain was coming; and Ahab was charged to be up and doing, for there was the sound of abundance of rain. Ahab rode in his chariot and went to Jezreel, and the prophet ran before the chariot. This is an indication that waiting upon God imparts extraordinary strength to us.

Now it is in the hour of victory that we have to be on our guard, for that hour is the time of our greatest weakness. If God has heard our prayer, let us not say much about it. Let us cherish the holy exercise in our own souls with God, for we may have to be deeply tested. There may be an element of pride attaching to me: "Look at me, God has answered *my* prayer." That will not do. God allows a test to His servant as another stage in the education, and the woman Jezebel, Ahab's queen, referring to the prophets of Baal says, "So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to-morrow about this time." And when Elijah saw that he went for his life.

He came to Beer-sheba with his servant, though he did not stay there. Ah, if he had stayed by the well of the oath, what would have

happened there! Beer-sheba is the "well of the oath." A grand place to sit, even if we have mistaken the way! He left his servant there, "but he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree, and he requested for himself that he might die, and said, It is enough, now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am not better than my fathers."

How we need to cry to the Lord for His servants, to preserve them and sustain them and keep them. He says, "I am not better than my fathers." Why, Elijah, did you think you were? A secret is coming out now. Sad it is, if any of us think we are better than our fathers, we may have to learn something more yet about our *fathers' God*, as others have done. He says, "Take away my life, for I am not better than my fathers"; and in weariness he lay down and went to sleep. I say, with reverence, that God looked down with deep feelings on the beloved Elijah. Here is the man who was standing alone for God on Mount Carmel lying down asleep, and his last prayer is that he might die.

God will not leave us if we fail. He sent an angel to Elijah, who prepared a cake on hot stones, and a cruse of water, and he awakens him. God may use some providential circumstance to awaken me, and then He will show me that He is with me still. Not bread and flesh now, but a cake baked *on hot stones*, as

though God would show me that the state of my spiritual health is such that I need this carefully-prepared *hot* meal. That is like God. "Arise and eat." Then he lay down and went to sleep again, and God says again, "Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee." God would imply that He knew Elijah was coming back again, though it might be a difficult way. Have we failed? God knows it and He would say, "Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee." It is a great journey, and God knows it.

But still the education is to continue, for Elijah goes now into a cave as though to hide himself. The Lord drew near and said, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" Now Elijah would have employed methods of severity to recover the people. Jehovah *passes by*, as intimating to Elijah that *He is moving*, He is not stationary, He has not suspended what He is doing with His people, even if the beloved prophet had done so. Then there was a great wind that rent the earth and brake the rocks in pieces. Elijah would have spoken to the people like that; and are not some of *us* like that? Judgment may be employed, but it is God's strange work. He will use other methods first. The Lord was not in the tempest. And now there is an earthquake. The whole place where Elijah was shook and trembled, as though God was speaking into his soul a sense that He knew what Elijah's thoughts were. That is

the way he would have dealt with the people who had turned away. But the Lord was not in the earthquake.

We must remember that judgment is God's strange work. It is as though God would tell us, " I am not accustomed to this. No, it is My strange work ". And then there is a fire. The Lord is not in the fire. And then in the New Translation it is beautifully rendered, there was a " soft, gentle voice ". That is the way the Lord was going to speak, and He would bring His servant into line with Him that he should learn to speak to the people of God with a soft, gentle voice. We must not resort to harsh methods, until every other possible avenue which is according to God has been explored. There is the " soft, gentle voice ", and God is speaking thus. It is as though God would say, " Elijah, I am not going to speak to you in a tempest, or earthquake, or fire, but I am going to whisper in your ear. I am coming near to you, and I want you to take on this character of address and behaviour to the people whom I love ". How this must have affected the prophet's heart !

And now, though the beloved servant's time on earth was drawing to a close, the Lord placed him in His service again, anointing kings and anointing a prophet to continue the divine service on earth according to God. And when all was finished this beloved servant

is taken up into heaven. May the Lord grant that we do not go forward to serve without knowing, at least, in some measure the line that God takes in the education of His servants.

Blairgowrie

V

CHRIST LOVED BY THE FATHER

Is. xlviii. 14, 15 ; John iii. 35, 36 ; John v. 20 ; John xiv. 31

I WANT to speak to you, if the Lord will help me, of the place which Christ the Son has in the love of God the Father, and to trace in connection with this the place which we have in the love of God the Father. Love is the greatest thing in the universe. There is no power equal to love ; God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God. We shall never be brought to have any part, any share in Deity, but we are already brought into the most intimate relationship with God that He is able to give, short of bringing us into Deity ; and I would ask you, beloved brethren, to weigh the magnificence of such a proposal as this. Most of us, probably, have the knowledge of forgiveness and salvation and know something of being the recipients of divine care here in circumstances of human life, as the result of which we can sing praises and give glory to God ; but that is far short of what God has in His mind for our enjoyment now and for the eternal portion of our hearts.

With regard to Christ, *He* had a place as a Person of the Godhead in the region of love

before ever this world was : there is no doubt about that (John xvii. 24). But it has pleased God to make Himself known, not only in the majesty of His power in creatorial works—He has done that—but fully made Himself known. He has, however, not taken the way of coming into revelation in an angel ; it has pleased Him to pass by angels and to take hold of the seed of Abraham and to come into revelation by becoming a Man. As you perceive this, I think you must realise that it expresses the greatness of divine love. God has come into revelation by becoming Man. You will readily perceive that had God taken up angelic form, whether of an ordinary angel or an archangel, we should have felt that we had nothing in common with an angel ; an angel knows nothing of human feelings, save as that which he may be capable of as an onlooker ; but God has been pleased to reveal Himself by becoming Man, and our Lord Jesus Christ, while essentially divine, as the Son of God is perfectly a Man. Every human feeling, every human sensitiveness is there in perfection. I do not possess human feeling in perfection ; I am painfully conscious of it ; but I know that the Lord Jesus Christ has human feelings in perfection. All our feelings are affected by sin and the power of moral death having come in as a result of the Fall ; but in the Lord Jesus Christ there is the perfection of human sensitiveness which belongs to no one else ; and God

has made Himself known in that blessed Man. I have sometimes sat quietly or knelt in prayer and thought of the immensity of Godhead—the splendour of Godhead—and felt how entirely it is outside my range altogether, and then, as through, I suppose, the Spirit of God, one has been awakened to the sense that God has revealed Himself in a Man, our Lord Jesus, and that great and glorious Personage has come within our range, so that we may know what God is and who He is, and that we may be instructed in His thoughts and His desires ; not through teaching only, for there is something greater than teaching, and that is influence ; and as having come under the rule of Christ (I do not use that word as applying it to anything arbitrary as we generally understand rule) one is instructed and educated in the knowledge of God not only by what He says, for He does speak, but by influence. There are things to be discovered by coming under His influence, and I am sure we know something of what this is. Now, as I said, the Lord occupied a place in Deity and in love. He was an object of affection and love in eternity (John xvii. 24), but having come into Manhood, He became in a peculiar and unique way an object of divine love. Hence He is referred to in scripture as " The Only Begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father " (John i. 18). The Lord alone has that unique place, but in addition to this place which the

Lord will ever hold, alone, He, as Man, is also Pattern for us, for we read, " that the world may know that thou hast . . . loved them as thou hast loved me." He is now Firstborn among many brethren and brings us to share with Him, as " firstborn ones ". God's purpose for us is that we should be conformed to the image of His Son ; He sent forth His Son that we might receive sonship ; and we are loved as He is loved.

Referring to the first passage that I read, it would appear from the words of the prophet Isaiah that in chapter xlviii. there is an allusion to Cyrus, king of Persia ; in chapter xlv. also God speaks of him as being anointed. But though alluding to Cyrus the chapter has Christ in view prophetically, and it says there, " The Lord hath loved him." Now, as come into this world the Lord came definitely to serve. I wish you to understand that Jesus, having come into this world, took up service, and He took it up in the consciousness of being loved. " Thou hast loved him." There never was a moment in the life of the Lord Jesus Christ in this world but He had the sense that He was loved of God. Not a moment. There are multitudes of incidents in that life not yet made known, perhaps typified in the manna placed in the golden pot and laid up in the sanctuary. There is the vast wealth into which we shall shortly be brought, when in those radiant courts of divine glory. We

shall then be let into the great secrets of Jesus in humiliation, and we shall learn in a fuller measure how that He had the consciousness of being loved by God, and the motive power behind His service was the consciousness of being loved of God. The motive behind all our service, the heavenly impulse behind all our activities, whether they be levitical, priestly, or those of sonship, should be the sense that we are loved of God.

The proposal is a wonderful one in Isaiah xlviii. The power of Babylon, the power of the Chaldeans is to be broken. Jesus is going to overthrow it for ever. Babylon has already fallen in our hearts, but the public overthrow is at hand. The world raises itself up to-day in its greatness; but let us remember the words, "His enemies shall lick the dust." So that we can afford to serve, although results may not be apparent. Our great Master had to say, "I have spent my strength for nought and in vain." Yet He laboured and served in the sense that He was loved by God. And you and I must serve in the sense of being loved whether among few or many, year in and year out, and possibly in comparative isolation. Was there ever any one who tasted loneliness like Jesus? When He said, "I am like a pelican of the wilderness . . . I have eaten ashes like bread." That glorious Person served with unwearying energy, because He ever dwelt in the love of God; and I know of no other way in which

we can serve but in the sense of divine love. If our serving is carried on in the consciousness of divine love, then it will be maintained at the high level of sonship.

Now pass on to the verse in John's gospel (iii. 35) where it is said, "The Father loves the Son, and has given all things [to be] in his hand." The Lord is presented here as One whom the Father loves, and He was conscious of being not only a servant but of being the Son. I want you to understand that that was always behind His service. Though He took the place of servant, He was ever conscious of sonship, I am speaking of what He was in manhood; for the place He had in sonship, as alluded to in scripture, was known by Him in manhood. "The Father loves the Son"—that is, in manhood—"and hath given all things into His hand." Think of the love of the Father to the Son—Man in this world—being such that He could put all things into His hand. What hand! I want you to think of the Lord Jesus as being one in manhood of such moral greatness and glory that the Father could put all things into His hand: not merely for a moment—it is not that He put things for a moment into His hand—but abidingly. Yes, that blessed One was here in this world, in the consciousness of being loved, in spite of rejection by man, and I suppose no gospel portrays the rejection of Jesus so pointedly as does the gospel of John. We find at one point

that He was surrounded by enemies, and yet He had the consciousness of sonship in His holy manhood and that all things were in His hands, placed there abidingly. What about the nations? what about the world? what about the affairs of this earth? The Father loves the Son, and He has put all things into His hand; and you and I are to be associated with Him. We can well wait patiently and serve, sustained by the love of the Father's heart. I suppose the allusion to all being given to be in His hand touches the point of the inheritance; for do not forget that we are heirs of God and joint heirs of Christ, and the moment is not far distant—it already exists according to the affections and thoughts of the heart of God—when God will head up all things in Christ, and we are going to be with Him. All things in His hand! What quietness and composure the knowledge of this would give to us; first the place the Son has in the Father's heart, and then that He has given all things into His hand. Do you really believe that all things are in the Son's hand? "The Father loves the Son and has given all things [to be] in His hand," so that whatever comes to you and to me comes through that hand. And all things have been placed in His hand. as the abiding witness to our hearts of the love of the Father to Him and of the character of the Person, the loved One of the Father's heart.

In the next passage that I read (v. 20) it says that the Father loves the Son and He *showeth* Him all things that Himself doeth. This unveils to us what was taking place in the life of Jesus, the blessed Son of God here on earth as He moved in the path of divine service. The Father loved Him, and He was able to show Him all things that Himself was doing. Indeed, the Lord says that, as He saw, He wrought, and as He heard, He did and spoke. You will recall that, with regard to Moses, he was charged in Exodus that everything in connection with the tabernacle had to be made according to the pattern that was shown him in the mount. Now Moses was only a minister himself, and there is no suggestion that Moses was shown these things because Jehovah loved him. Jehovah trusted him; he was one who could be trusted. Hence he was shown, not only the pattern of the tabernacle but the pattern of the things of the holy sanctuary. But when it is a question of Jesus, "The Father loveth the Son and showeth Him *all things*." What God has shown to Moses was but an item of the "all things". But when it is the Son of God in manhood, "The Father . . . showeth him *all* things that himself doeth." You will remember that with regard to king David and Solomon and the building of the temple David handed over to Solomon the pattern. Such accuracy was to be secured that the pattern of the things was handed over in writing so that there should

be no departure from what was shown to David by the Spirit. God gave it to him in writing so that the whole of the house and the houses in connection with the temple were to be according to what was shown and given. But when Jesus comes in " all things " are in view, the earthly and the heavenly system. The Father loveth the Son and showeth Him *all things*. Think of the place that Jesus has taken, think of the place that He had in manhood as Son, and that He received these things as shown by the Father. I want you to note the name of Father ; it does not say God. There is one God the Father, it is true. But when it says " The Father " gave all things to be in His hands, and " the Father " showeth Him all things that Himself doeth, it implies that the whole movement is a movement of love. Moreover, we, being through redemption associated with the Son of God, are privileged to know what these " all things " are. Christ is the Firstborn, and we are with Him, and if we want to know what are the heavenly things, we have access to Him, and they have all been shown to Him. There is nothing of those " all things " outside the range of the Son in manhood, and the saints are associated with Him. God desires that the saints should be—indeed, they are now—the most illustrious assembly the world has ever seen. The Father loveth the Son and showeth Him—it does not say that He *did* show ; it puts it that way in order to give it a

living present force—He showeth. And you and I are presently, perhaps in a few hours, to be caught up to form that great assembly on high. We need to give our whole mind to these "all things". The things in this world are beneath you. We are privileged to know the "all things that himself doeth". He has shown them to the Son because He loved Him; and because He loves you and me we have been given a place in association with the Son of God. It is not only that the Father has loved Jesus but He also loves us.

Then in the fourteenth chapter of John it says (ver. 21), "he that hath my commandments." What a word, We have His commandments. What are we doing with them? Can we, as sitting here together, say that there is not a known commandment that we are not keeping? What about the Lord's supper—are we all breaking bread? The commandments are binding. Love has the greatest force, an arbitrary commandment is not so binding. "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them." You must keep them. Why? Because He loves you. You must never lose sight of the fact that He loves you, has loved you unto death. "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." "He that loveth me"—here we come in—"shall be loved of my Father." Has He given you the care of His people? What has He put into your hand? Why? Because

He loved you. Is it because you are a competent brother? Not at all, it is because He loves you; it is the greatest trust that can ever be imposed. He has given you something in your hand because He loves you, and not only so, He will show you things, because He loves you. Take it to heart; the Father loves you, and as Jesus says, "The Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me." So that in our measure we have the opportunity of coming into the enjoyment of the Love that He knew in limitless fullness. Think of having such a place of service. The Father has given it because He loves you. We can take up the path of service now, and take up the things which are put into our hands, because He loves us, and we can take them up as conscious of our relation as associated with the Son of God. Do not step down from your dignity. Remember whatever you are doing down here—the most menial service—will never rid us of this, that we are numbered among the sons of the first-born family and we are loved.

Nonington

VI

SURPASSING EXCELLENCE

Ps. viii. 1 ; Heb. i. 1-4 ; Phil. iii. 7-9 ; Ps. xvi. 1-3 ; 2 Cor. iv. 6, 7 ; 1 Cor. xii. 31

The serious depression in value of material things, beloved brethren, awakes an inquiry in our hearts as to whether we have rightly valued divine things. God Himself, and all that stands related to the realm of blessedness which God has opened up to us, may be regarded as *excellent* ; and I want to show you the excellency of what we have, for all we have in God and in Christ excels in value everything that this world can bestow. I ask the attention of those who are younger, particularly, for I do not wish you to follow up anything except what is *excellent*. It appears to me that it will be to our lasting discredit if we pursue things that are not excellent ; and I raise the challenge here with you all, as to whether we are really following what is excellent. God has not changed ! Christ has not depreciated ! All that God has to bestow is marked by abiding excellency ; so that in pursuing divine things, we are choosing the best, and if any of you are choosing the world, your foolishness is apparent to all. Do not despise or discredit the people of God, for they are seeking the things that excel ; whereas

you are following the things that are rapidly depreciating.

The Psalmist has evidently been greatly impressed with his knowledge of God, for he says, " Jehovah our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth ! " (Psalm viii. 1). God's name excels every other name, not only locally, but universally, as it says, " in all the earth ". Whatever part of the earth you care to bring up for comparison, God's name excels every other name there. There are illustrious names, some of which are universally valued and honoured ; but, mainly, they are local or national—not excellent in all the earth, for in other parts of the earth they are unknown. But with God, His name is excellent in all the earth ! There are, as I said, great names, but I do no one a dishonour if I remind you that no earthly name is excellent in *all* the earth, for if you were to examine them, you would find something there which is discreditable. But not so with God—no one could discover anything to discredit God. The whole history of time may pass under critical examination—but His name is excellent in all the earth, whose majesty is set " above the heavens " ; so there is nothing to be ashamed of in being here for God. Indeed, there is something to be ashamed of if you are *not* here for Him, if you have not yet learned what is truly excellent.

First of all, let us consider God's name in relation to His *word*. Many a man has given

his word, and has been compelled to retire from it ; but not so with God. You remember the wicked Balaam said, " God is not a man, that he should lie." " Shall he say, and not do ? " (Num. xxiii. 19). What a word for the king of Moab to hear, who desired to curse the people of God. Surely His name is excellent in all the earth ! You recall that after the Flood God gave His word that He would never overthrow the earth by water again. He said, " I set my bow in the clouds "—not in the *firmament*, but in the *clouds*. God said that advisedly. When we were passing over the Atlantic recently the sky was lowering, and it looked tempestuous, but in the eastern sky there stretched a rainbow with an arc dipping each end into the sea. As I looked on that, I thought of God's name—it is excellent in all the earth ! Will He ever break His word ? Never. You may trust Him. You may trust a brother, and he may fail you because he is incapable ; but it is *never* thus with God. Never ! Throughout all generations, to the last hour in time, that word will stand ; God can be trusted, and you may rely upon Him. Beloved, what stability does this give us ! We are not trusting in things that *are* to-day, and to-morrow are gone ; our trust is in the living God, and we have a foundation in Him that is immutable—for His name is excellent in all the earth. Whether north or south, east or west, God is to be trusted ; and would have us rely on Him who is invisible.

Think of man intruding into God's domain. Men laugh to scorn those words " seeing him who is invisible " (Heb. x. 12). What a paradox they are to puny man ! But not to the person who knows God, for although invisible to the natural eye, even Job could say, " Lo, he goeth by me " (Job ix. 11)—he *knew* it. We have known seasons when God has been very near to us, which have enhanced Him to us ; such seasons give us a status *on* the earth, but not *of* it. I would remind you also of the word God spoke to Noah, after He had smelled that savour of rest : " Henceforth, all the days of the earth, seed time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease " (Gen. viii. 22). God has always been true to His word, and ever will be.

We may speak of God's name in relation to what He does. I venture to say that God has never done a single thing that could be amended. I am somewhat amused, at times, when I hear of scientists who imagine they could amend the acts of God, and so make a better world than He. Forsooth, what nonsense ! His name is excellent in all the earth, and there we stand. We know but very little of the creation ; but when we sit down and meditate upon God's works therein, how magnificent they are ! The tiniest insect that hums in the summer breeze has a place in God's creation, for He never created anything aimlessly. The mountain that towers in the clouds—has that been put there

for nothing? No. Whether it be the heavens above or the earth beneath or the waters that cover the sea, they alike proclaim for ever the transcendent wisdom of our God, and we stand by this. Are we going to be driven from our foundation by all the foolish cavilling of man? No, not for one minute! We say with a calm resolution, "Jehovah our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!" and stand by that.

God's name is excellent with regard to what He *gives*. He has given the best. Think of what He has given to us! Take the earth for example; think of the resources of it! We touch only the very fringe of what there is to know of it. Inventors are crowned with laurels, but the Creator of the things that they discover is forgotten. Do we speak of the marvels of radiography and other discoveries, but forget to render homage to Him who brought the whole universe into existence by His word? What God has given is great, and we can praise Him for all His works. Every morning, the light of which breaks on our lives, is only a reminder of the innumerable gifts He has given. Where should we be without them?—and yet we often rejoice in the gifts, and, alas! forget the Giver. Is this right? We know it is not. May God grant that there may be found in our souls a greater sense of the excellence that there is in Him, and in His greatest gift, His Son. The world has turned away from Him;

it took all that He gave, and misused it. God gave His Son to die in woe unspeakable, in anguish indescribable ; He was scorned, despised, spit upon, and hated by the world that has turned away from God and from His grace. But *His* name is excellent in all the earth, and will yet be made known through Him who in death has declared that name. There shall be glory to God " in the assembly in Christ Jesus unto all generations of the age of ages " (Eph. iii. 21).

I do feel that we need to understand the immense value of what we have in God. His name, as revealed, sets forth what He is, and so excels everything in all the earth.

Well, I now desire to say a word with regard to Christ and *His* name. The writer of Hebrews was laying out before believers that God had spoken in His son " whom he has established heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds " (Heb. i. 2). He refers to this great and glorious Person as having a name more excellent than angels ; now, angels have a name, they have renown ; Psalm ciii. speaks of them as excelling in strength ; and Job xxxviii. speaks of the sons of God shouting for joy when the earth's foundations were laid—a wonderful intimation of what took place in view of God's counsels in grace. But think of Christ—He inherits a name more excellent than angels. Angels were named sons of God ; they were created beings who derived their origin from

God ; but think of the moment when Jesus became man and could respond to God as His Son. He occupied that place on the earth as God's Son, not merely as a son, but *the* Son ! And He inherited a name more excellent than angels, for no person ever appeared before or since who could fill out that name : neither Michael, nor Gabriel, nor any other angel could fill out that unique place which was His, yet the proud world despised Him, scorned and crucified Him. We shall yet be acquainted with the greatness of angels, for Michael and Gabriel are great personages. Think of Gabriel's saying, " I am Gabriel, who stand before God " (Luke i. 19) ; and yet the religious leaders of to-day dare to place this lowly Man on a platform of equality with other men. It is blasphemous sacrilege, and our souls revolt against it. We have in Him a Person whom we know, and we are sitting at His feet learning heavenly wisdom from Him ; never was there a teacher like Him at whose feet we may sit without fear. You do not require to graduate at the universities ; it will damage you, for there is the awful danger that you trust in your own mind, and he who does that quenches the Spirit ; let us sit at the feet of Christ, and learn heavenly wisdom from Him. We know men who have done this, and their wisdom is apparent to all. Let us follow their example, and so become wise. A man counts it a great day when he can bring forward his son and

say, " This is my son." God has said, " This is my beloved Son : hear him " (Mark ix. 7). He only whose name is excellent is to be heard.

Let us now examine the thing worked out in a man's soul : Saul of Tarsus, although no ordinary man, attached no value to himself at all ; yet he was high-born, and was educated at the feet of Gamaliel. He was also free-born. When the captain of the military guard in Jerusalem said to Paul, " I, for a great sum bought this citizenship," Paul could say, " But I was also free born " (Acts xxii. 28). Paul had a great status on the earth under the providence of God ; and we must take care that we recognize and respect God's providence. There is a satanic effort in the world to break it down, but providence must be respected among us. Paul had seen a glory in Christ that surpassed all other glory, and he gave up everything for Him ; he was content to suffer the loss of everything for Him, and, as he writes, to " count also all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord " (Phil. iii. 8). Here was a man who had much on this earth, in the way of status and masterly ability, but he laid it all down at the feet of Jesus—that anointed, blessed Man whom God had exalted. Now I ask : Has Christ a like place in your heart ? You may hold the doctrine of it, but have you got the thing ? You may be as sound as possible in doctrine, but what is that without the thing ? You can

very soon tell whether a person has counted things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, for in such a case He is the dearest and the most treasured Object of the heart. Do you dress as though you belonged to a Person so illustrious, or do you adopt the fashions of the world to adorn the body that belongs to the anointed Man? Do you want to speak like persons who are in darkness and at a distance from God? What language do you speak—that of Wall Street, or the language of heaven, the most dignified that the universe will ever know? Beloved brethren, we want to be like Christ, to be suitable in our bearing, in our deportment and speech and dress, so that we can be taken up and put down on that golden street in heaven! Let me ask you, dear young brethren: Has Christ the supreme place in your hearts? Oh, it is a lovely thing to know Christ. How it refines one to meditate on His glory, and to commune with Him! We thus become morally great, even as Paul could speak of "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord". That holy, anointed Man dominated his whole life, and everything else was as filth to him. I do urge the younger ones to stand out nobly from this world, to set themselves to know Christ, and to give Him the first place in their hearts, even as Paul did. Remember that if you are trafficking with this world, you have not got Christ as the hidden Man of the heart. May God give it to us to

know Him thus increasingly, so that we shall stand out in this world as those alluded to in Psalm xvi. as " the saints that are in the earth . . . the excellent." There are none to equal them. They are royal and ennobled people marked by a peculiar glory. Some may think that this country is the most excellent nation, but that is wrong !—the saints of God are the most excellent in the earth. Have you seen the light of the glory of heaven in the face of a little crippled woman in a cottage ? Have you ever seen the very joy of the golden street coming into the soul of a dying brother ? Oh, how wonderful it is thus to know the saints ! They are indeed the excellent in the earth. My dear young people, set yourselves to be identified with the people of God. You boys at school, choose your companions among those who belong to Christ. You children of Christian parents, let me affectionately entreat you to choose your companions among God's people. They are the excellent on the earth. Love them, serve them. I am not concerned about their failures, but about the moral glory that I have seen in them, day by day, and in every land that I visit. I am glad to know the saints, without regard to class or colour, as the excellent in the earth !

Now, we have to remember that we can trust in nothing as inherited by us. Paul spoke in 2 Cor. iv. 4 of the " radiancy of the glad tidings of the glory of the Christ ". He had in

mind the glory of Christ shining from him ; whilst the apostles had a place of precedence among the saints, they had only a place, really, in the enjoyment of the thing, which is proper to all Christians ; Paul spoke of the excellency of the power, that it might be of God and not from us ; he alludes to the radiance of the glory that should shine in the body of the ordinary Christian. That is a wonderful thing ; our first qualification is that our bodies should be transparent vessels, so that the glory may shine forth, not only by what we *say*, but by what we *are*. I could point to people who have never said a word to me, yet I have seen the radiancy of the glory of Christ there. No doubt the reference is to Gideon's men, whose pitchers were broken in order that the light might shine forth, but the apostle has in mind the greatness of divine power on our behalf, so that the light may shine forth, not by breaking the vessels, but by their transparency, which is a greater thing ; and we have the excellency of the power of God on our behalf in view of this. I know by experience, that there is great power in the evil influences of the world, but I know a power that excels : it is the power of God, so he says that the excellency of the power may be of God, upon which we may count. You can always have that power demonstrated to you from the Lord on high—I commend it to you ; I beg you to put it to the test. When you feel the power of the world

against you, say, " Lord, help me." I would like you to leave to-night with a sense that the power is available for you, and that you know how to apply it—a power that excels all other. Now, we have to be on our guard, because we occupy a position of excellent greatness ; we have a power that excels on our side.

I turn for a moment, before I close, to speak of love's way in relation to gift. Gift is really an expression here, in man, of Christ on high. Whatever form the gift may take, that is what it is. The apostle often alludes to the matter of gift. He says, " Desire earnestly the greater gifts " (1 Cor. xii. 31)—showing that gift is open to desire. It is a great thing to have gift as power from the ascended Man ; but we must ever remember that there is something greater than gift, and that is love ; and love, the divine nature, is open to us all, it is " a way ", as Paul says, " of more surpassing excellence ". Now, what is needed among us to hold us together, and to help us in relation to Christ Jesus and to God, is love, love that " has long patience, is kind ", that " does not impute evil ", that " is not insolent and rash ", that " is not puffed up ". Do we know this more excellent way of love ? Without it, my dear brother, I am nothing ! One may ask, " Here is a brother who has given his body to be burned. Has he love ? " Without it, he is nothing. " Here is a sister who is well off, and gives everything for the poor. Has she love ? "

Without it, she is nothing. " Here is a brother that can preach with the eloquence of an archangel ; everybody is flocking to hear him. Has he love ? " Without love, he is nothing ; he is no more than " sounding brass or a clanging cymbal ". Love is of God—it is the way of surpassing excellence. Love will suffer ; love will die. The One who set forth love in all its greatness did not stand for His rights, much less fight for them. Love in Christ, suffered, died, gave all ! This is the way of surpassing excellence of which this world knows nothing. The world is full of lust and hatred and envy, but I know a place where divine love is, even among God's people. It is a way of surpassing excellence.

New York.

VII

STARS

GEN. i. 14-16 ; MATT. ii. 1-11 ; 1 COR. xv. 39-42

THE scripture in the epistle to the Corinthians, which we read, justifies our regarding the people of God as under the figure of stars. You will have noticed in the book of Genesis that while the whole creation stands out as the handiwork of God, yet the stars are mentioned as an item by themselves, which will help us in what we are about to look at ; for it is said that God created great lights, the sun to rule by day and the moon to rule by night, and then it says, " He made the stars also." I need not remind the brethren here, I am sure, that the sun is a type of Christ, and the moon may be regarded as a type of the church. But the stars are figures of persons. Viewed severally, but set in relation to Christ and each other, it is said, " He made the stars also."

I am not now about to speak to you of the church as typified in the moon, but of ourselves as persons who form the church, typified in the stars, not as isolated individuals, but as a constellation under the figure of the stars, and I beg you, brethren, to seek from the Lord that you might be delivered from any kind of isolated position. I will show you later that it

must become exceedingly perilous if we who form the church become isolated, as, from what I understand, although I am afraid I am somewhat ignorant of the stars, no star is independent of the others. Men used to think that the stars were independent, but they are rapidly arriving at the truth that the stars have been set by God in the heavens together as a whole.

And what is stated of the sun and moon is also stated in reference to the stars, namely, that they are there to rule. The sun is to rule in the day and the moon and the stars are to rule in the night. And I put it as an inquiry to us all, as to whether we are exercising an influence from God over this earth. As being one of the stars, you should be ruling, taking part in an influence of rule over this earth. I do not know whether you have been aroused in your affections to this, and what kind of life you are living where God has put you—in the city, town, or village, where you are—but you should be a ruling influence for God, as being one of the great number of stars. It is a serious inquiry. I trust, dear brethren, that all of us here are exercising some degree, at least, of rule. I do not know whether I may address you as living in Woodstock, or Hamilton, but that place ought to be that much better off because you are there ; and if it is not, then you are not filling out the divine design in giving you a place which is set forth in the stars in the heaven. A boy at school who

is converted and knows the Lord ought to exercise some influence over the others, and if he is true to the Lord Jesus he will. I have no doubt there are some here who do. You may think you are only a little star, but a star is a very great thing in God's design, because the stars are to rule the night. There is a sense in which we are related, as I will show you, to the morning, but the main suggestion is in relation to the night.

Now in the prophet Joel we read in two places of a day which appears to be coming when the stars will withdraw their shining—a very serious matter for the world—but I raise the inquiry as to whether we are among the shining stars. Things may have come in which interfere with our shining, but God's end in putting the stars, by power of creation, in the heavens, is that they should shine ; and we should be shining. Are you shining among the stars ? Are you bringing heavenly light towards this earth, into the office where you are working—what kind of shining is there ?

Are you a shining star ? On the market, in the business, in the mill, in the workshop, and in the assembly, are you a shining star ? Do you bring light in ? We should be among the shining stars. It will be a terrible day, to which the prophet Joel refers, when the stars withdraw their shining. We should never withdraw our shining. We should at every time be shining as the stars in the firmament.

Job refers to stars as singing. I have noticed that there are some of the saints who do not sing. I have not yet asked them why. Maybe they cannot sing, but they can make a joyful noise, I am sure ; and I doubt whether there is any one who cannot really sing. I have sometimes discerned the voices of the children in the assembly. Some one once said, " Do you not think it is out of place for the children to sing ? They sing loudly and are often out of tune." No, I love to hear them ; it does not distract me. I love to be among the saints and know they are among the singing stars. Job says, in view of creation, the morning stars sang together, and do you know the effect—the sons of God shouted for joy (Job xxxviii. 7). Music has a remarkable place in the divine realm. If you examine passages in Chronicles referring to music, you will find there is much to show that music, which is under the direction of God's Spirit, has an uplifting effect. It is a great thing for the brethren to be able to sing. Are you a singing star, my dear brother ? The effect of it is the sons of God will shout for joy. The word shout is used generally as meaning a shout of victory or triumph. We should be able to bring in an element of harmony in singing that so affects the brethren that the sons of God shout for joy—not groan in misery. There is no such custom in the assemblies. Oh, but you say, the times are very difficult. They are ; but has God changed ? Has the precious

truth altered? No. Oh, that the Lord may so help us in spiritual energy and power that we may be found among the stars that sing, and it is the morning stars that sing—not the persons who are in the darkness of the night, and who say it is so difficult that I cannot see the way. You belong to the morning stars and you should be with the morning stars singing, and the sons of God will shout with joy. By that means you will bring into the assemblies an element of holy triumph in what God is, and what the Lord is. Oh, that we may be found among those that sing. Do you know the Lord sang? It says (Matt. xxvi. 30): "And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives," teaching us that singing a hymn has an elevating effect, similar to this, that the sons of God shouted for joy. May He help us in this, so that we may develop in what is called for in Psalm cxlviii., where the exhortation is to the stars to praise God, so that we may not only be singing in our own soul's happiness in the knowledge of what the Lord has done, but voicing our praises, rejoicing not only in what He is and what He has done, but expressing to Him our love for Him and for His own Son.

It is a great thing to be among the stars that are praising. You must understand, whenever there is an allusion to things of this character, there is a spiritual thought behind it, and the spiritual thought behind it is that we are called upon to praise. A person who is going on

badly cannot sing praises. He has a bad conscience, and if he has not a bad conscience he ought to have. So in order to have our part and place here among the stars that are praising, our walk must be according to God. Perhaps that is the reason, although one hesitates to think it, that certain of the saints do not sing. Is it because they are not happy? Is it because there is some secret thing in the soul—something that has been unjudged, some unforgiving spirit? Is this the reason why we cannot sing?

Oh, that there might be heart-searching and self-judgment, so that we may not only be among the singing stars but that we may be among those who are praising God. It is a great service; God delights in it—to hear the voices of His people praising Him—and He delights to hear our voices raised in praise to the Lord Jesus, for in so doing we take part in that which is going on for ever and for ever. The spirit of praise will for eternity be on our lips. May God put it there on our lips for praising Him.

I notice we sometimes have meetings which are placed open to enable the brethren to speak to us; but why do we not speak to the Lord, and why do we not praise Him? Why do not two or three rise to address the Lord in praise? It would be a wonderful thing. We are called upon "to praise, all ye stars of light". That is what God is looking for, and what heaven is waiting for.

Now, leading along this line, we come to another range of things entirely, and I remind the brethren of an instance which is recorded in the book of Judges (Judges iv.), when the king of Canaan came up against the people of God. What immense power he had—great chariots of iron, and great forces against God's people. He had a great general in his army, as you remember, called Sisera. Now we have to remember that there are forces, unseen and unknown, often, to us, which are against us. You know Satan and all his emissaries are against us. We have to enter into conflict, not with flesh and blood, but with the lords of darkness, who are against us because of our elevation to the heavenly places. That is where Satan is for the moment, and he will not tolerate that we should in spirit and thought and affections occupy the heavenly places. The Lord has gone up there. He has gone up far above all heavens, and Satan knows it, and he knows it is not long before he will be dislodged, and so he is against us. Now God's people appealed to Jehovah, and God took up two women, one of whom was a notable sister, Deborah ; and God will often take up the sisters. Perhaps we brothers do not realize the place the sisters have, but we have to come to it. God will often, in an assembly, take up sisters, and He will work in them and through them so that a victory is secured. That has happened more than once ; and what the Lord showed in

reference to this conflict of the king of Canaan with the people of God, was that the stars fought against Sisera. Deborah in her wonderful song alludes to it.

It says, " The stars in their courses fought against Sisera " (Judges v. 20). What a comfort it is to realize that the people of God may come in as identified with an exercise which the Lord may awaken possibly through the women. God has done wonderful things through women in church history, and indeed in all history. We have to remember that there is an opportunity for us to have a part in the conflict against what is opposing the people of God, and I want to ask you if you realize what it is to be found among the stars that are fighting. The stars, it says, in their courses fought against Sisera. Are you among them? There may be some conflict in the assembly where you are. Are you among them? I have heard brothers say, " The meeting is so late, I am not going. I am so tired, and it is just a prayer meeting." The stars in their courses fought against Sisera, it says. Are we prepared to sacrifice anything and everything, to take part in the conflict as fighting stars? That is what is called for. And the effect of the stars fighting against Sisera was that Jael came with a thing you would look on with disdain to bring down a great military general. She took a tent-nail and a hammer ; she knew the moment to strike, when he was off his

guard, and she struck at the critical moment. Why? Because the stars in their courses fought against Sisera. Do we know what it is to be in conflict? I am sometimes asked if I have taken part in military affairs, and I always say "Yes." It involves fighting under this banner which is Christ's banner, and His banner over us is love, and the conflict in which we stand for the truth is faced by us, and we stand in it because we love Him; and we desire in all our dealings to be actuated by holy love, and holy love is intolerant of evil. We must take part here in Canada—in Hamilton, in Toronto, wherever we may be, as long as the assembly is on earth. We must have our part among the stars that "*in their courses*" fought against Sisera. Remarkable words. You must know what course you are in. There are ordered ways or courses for stars, and the fighting goes on. The war is on, engagement after engagement, until the last great battle will come and the saints will be translated into heaven. The truth is being maintained here on this earth, and it is being maintained by the Lord in heaven, and the stars are engaged here in conflict. May the Lord give us preparedness of heart to be here as good soldiers; as Paul says to Timothy, "Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ (2 Timothy ii. 3).

This is what we need, otherwise we may have to be numbered among the falling stars,

for there are such. The Lord refers, in Mark xiii. 25, to a day that is coming when the stars of heaven shall fall, and there have been many among believers that might be numbered among the fallen stars. I do not know whether you have in mind any believers whom you know who are fallen stars. I have met them ; I have seen them ; some who once took a prominent part in church affairs are now in the world ; persons who once had a place among the people of God are now among those who are seeking to mutilate the truth. It is a solemn thing to feel that I may be there. Hourly watchfulness, diligence in prayer, is required that we may be preserved, that we may not be among the fallen stars.

There are certain who are referred to as wandering stars. Jude tells us of them (ver. 13). He describes them so that there is no doubt as to them. There are people who have been numbered among the people of God, who are far from the truth, and I have no doubt they are wandering stars. It says, " to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever." If you have any fear that your course is such, I beg you in sincerity of heart, to get into the presence of the Lord, allow those eyes that are as a flame of fire (Rev. i. 14) to search you, and inquire whether you really belong to Him, lest it be said of you, " the blackness of darkness for ever." May the Lord help us in regard to these serious matters.

I want to turn to what I may speak of as an individual position, and the brethren will understand what I have in mind. We were speaking together in the afternoon of the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in the passage I read in the gospel of Matthew we have certain details which are not mentioned by Luke in his account. In Matthew's gospel mention is made of the wise men who came from the East, and they saw a remarkable thing. They say, " Where is he that is born King of the Jews, for we have seen his star " (not stars—His star). And that star appears to have moved and stood over the place where Christ was. It is said that when they saw His star they rejoiced. Now I put it to my own heart—indeed I have done so already, I trust, but one would do so again—and to all the brethren here : Are you the Lord's star in the place that the Lord has allowed you to be ? That star in the East may have been a very wonderful star, and I conclude it was a marvellous star as to its shining, but all else is forgotten in this, that it was His star. The only thing for which that star shone was to show where He was. Now I ask you, in your family, what are you shining for ? Is it to bring Him in ? Is that what you are shining for ? As a husband with a wife, how do you shine ? Is it that she may know more of Christ, and that He may be greater to her ? As father, do you shine that Christ may be known in

your household, so that the children may know the Lord? Is He loved, and is a greater place given to Him than to any one in the house?

And in the assembly, are you a star that guides to Him? Is our influence where we are set, such that it has this one result, in leading every eye to Christ, that He is known, He is worshipped, He is loved? Or have we risen to a position of leading for the sheer love of being first? Such are not of His stars. No, you might think you are, but—you will excuse me speaking to you gently and affectionately—you are not His star. You will not lead us to Him, for He never took that place. You may say, "But I am leader." Where do you lead? Leading brother, where do you lead? Do you lead to this—that those who are seeking Christ, when they see you shining, find Him and forget you? His star had this effect—that when the wise men saw that star and went to the place over which that star stood they forgot the star, and worshipped Him and that is what we must be as His stars. If you and I do not lead to Christ, we are diverting from Him. As His stars, the only thing for you and me is to guide where He is, so that He is worshipped and we are forgotten.

If I never see your face again in the flesh, will you pray for me, for I will pray for you, that you and I may be as His stars, for His Name's sake.

Hamilton, Ontario

VIII

PRINCES

NUMBERS vii. 1-17, 89 ; 1 SAMUEL ii. 8

My thought in speaking, beloved saints, is to base what I want to call attention to on the verse which I read from the first book of Samuel, where it says, " He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory." What I have in view is to speak about the princes, for every believer should have nothing less before him than that he may occupy the place of a prince. Most of us will feel how far we are from this, but do not let us forget that it is God's work. " He raiseth up the poor . . . and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes." Therefore we may count on God to effect this great work in every one of us, for the twelve princes that offered according to the account in the book of Numbers represented the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel. And I do not think it would be a right thing at all to assume that princes are to be found among only a few. As to what actually takes place, the number of princes among us may be fewer than we would desire, but I want to insist before proceeding

further that to become a prince is open to every believer.

With a view to showing the manner of God's work in forming princes—for it says, He lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set him among princes—I shall allude to the history of Jacob, for towards the close of his remarkable history you will remember that God says of him that he was a prince. And his conduct shows that he was a prince, and a man who will yet inherit the throne of glory. He will occupy a great place in the coming kingdom in relation to our Lord Jesus Christ.

I am sure you young people delight to read these narratives in the Holy Scriptures. I trust you are not wasting your time reading the rubbish this world has to offer. Scripture is the outcome of divine breathing ; and there is, as a consequence, in scripture a power that is not found in any other writing, whatever it may be. You will remember that Jacob was one of twins—twin brother of Esau—and when he was born he laid hold of Esau by the heel. And the prophet Hosea tells us that, he laid hold of his brother by the heel, and by strength he prevailed. That was shown at the close of the remarkable history in which God dealt with him. So I would urge upon all believers that we may acquire strength. God is the source of all strength in the universe, and God will impart strength to them that wait upon Him for it.

It says in this early history (Gen. xxv. 27) that Jacob was a plain man—homely, living in tents. It says of his twin brother that he was a skilled hunter. This is the line that men have valued in this world. Is there any one here that is proceeding on the line of a skilled hunter? You may hunt with diligence in the marts of the world to acquire what may make you great in the world. What God is looking for is a plain man that is prepared to dwell in a tent. There is hardly time to build a house. He lived in a tent. God has given us all things richly to enjoy, but to minister to natural appetites is dangerous. I warn you against it. Esau came in faint with hunting. There are not a few Esaus who have been faint with hunting. It is a dangerous pursuit, this hunting —seeking to acquire this, that, and the other thing from this world. I urge you, do not become faint in hunting. Be more like Jacob. God is working that you may become a prince. What a word for the younger brethren! Would you not like to be lifted from a beggar to be among princes?

Esau comes in faint with his hunting, and he finds that Jacob has prepared his meal, and he says, "Feed me with pottage; I am faint." Jacob sees the opportunity. Some light had reached him from God as to blessing, and he sees an opportunity and says to Esau, "Sell me this day thy birthright." Esau argues, "Behold I am at the point to die"; he would not

live long, so he sold it. Jacob makes him swear, and he gives him the birthright. Esau despised it ; Jacob valued it. Jacob has light from God, and he intends to take up the blessing. Jacob sells the present moment of advantage to Esau and gains the birthright. Is there someone here that values the blessing of the birthright ? Jacob sought and obtained it.

Following on this, the moment comes when he sees an opportunity to secure the blessing. Wrong means were adopted on the part of Jacob, only showing that there is nothing inherent in any one of us that is of any value before God. The only thing of any value is the work of God in us by His Spirit. But Isaac was becoming aged, and Jacob sees the chance to get the blessing. He was set, at all cost, on this, that he might get the blessing. I am not implying that any of us should employ undesirable means. But there should be a deep-rooted desire in each one of us to secure the blessing. Jacob got the blessing, but God will not sanction such methods as those employed by Jacob. The point is that he sought the blessing and got the blessing. If there is any one set on this, are you conscious of divine blessing ? It was a desire deep-rooted in Jacob's soul. Do you desire the blessing of God ? I am sure the brethren desire it. All that you may acquire in the world you must leave. The greatest " riches . . . make

themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven".

Though God approved of Jacob's desire for the blessing, he comes under the government of God for his method. If you deceive another, the day will come when you will be deceived. You cannot escape it. We may well fear the hand of God's government.

But now the moment has come when his father and mother take it in hand to advise him in regard to his future. Are you obeying your father and mother? If you dare to disobey your father and mother you will never prosper. Until you judge that unholy thing you will never prosper. It is a law that will never be altered. But I hear some one whispering that it is old-fashioned. It is. It is old—as old as the very command of God.

Jacob obeyed his father and mother, and Esau knew it. Esau saw that Jacob obeyed them, for Israel said to Jacob, "Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan." And let me entreat you, young man, do not you take a wife out of the world. Esau married a woman descended from Hagar. It was wrong; but nothing turned out right that began wrong. There are wrecked and ruined homes and families because people defy what they know to be right. May it be a warning to us. It is a most lovely thing to have a son come to you and say, "I am thinking of doing this thing. What would you advise me to

do?" Have you your son's confidence like that? There is many a boy who will go to his mother. Jacob listened to both father and mother.

He went to Padan-aram, unto Laban. God is going to be with him. It is true that he was afraid of Esau; but God was going to be with him and give power unto him. A fugitive on his journey, he was alone at night, and he lay down upon the bare ground. He was a plain man. He took a stone for a pillow and lay down to sleep. A man with God can rest in very plain circumstances. If you and I take to divine ways we may often have to lie on a hard pillow. But as he slept he dreamed, and he saw a ladder which reached to heaven; and, behold, the angels of God ascending and descending upon it. And, behold, the Lord stood above it. God was standing there. He says, "The land whereon thou liest"—as much as to say, "I know you are weary, I won't ask you to get up"—"the land whereon thou liest, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed; and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south." And He says, "I am with thee, and I will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land." Do you want anything better than that?

"I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." The Lord

has taken you up and will not put you down. You may pass out into a path of your own will and choice, but He will surely follow you. God will never give you up. " I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." He means to bless us ; He means to give us what is eternal, spiritual ; He means to make you a prince. You may not wish to be a prince, but God wants you to be a prince, and a prince in the sanctuary.

Jacob awakes and he says, " The Lord is in this place and I know it not. . . . How dreadful is this place." He takes the stone, raises it up for a pillar, and pours oil on top of it, and he called the place Bethel, the house of God. He knew in that hour that God would be with him on the earth. God delights to come to His house and unfold His thoughts to us. God's way with Jacob is to proceed further, for he is a prince in the making. God has him in hand. He proceeds on his journey and he meets Rachel, and finds his uncle's home in the land of his fathers, where Isaac had told him to go ; and he is invited to remain. God is over these circumstances. God is over the circumstances of life in a wonderful way if we will only put ourselves in His hand. Jacob loves Rachel, and he bargains with his uncle to serve seven years to have her for his wife. God is creating affections in his soul. Have you a lot of light ? God wants affection. God is love. Heaven is full of love, and God

begins now to teach Jacob something about a peculiar love he has never known before. He waited seven years, and they seemed to him but as one day. When he should have had her he was deceived. Instead of giving him Rachel for whom he had laboured his uncle deceived him. Look what he has to suffer for deceiving Isaac. The government of God is an awful thing. The government of God moves on a line that no one can interfere with. Poor Jacob !

Jacob agrees to serve another seven years and he is given Rachel. He served seven years and won her in the end. God was teaching him the fidelity of love. Have you one you love? Love through to the end. Never allow your affections to wander. Let them be fixed. That was what Jacob learned, for he loved her at the end of fourteen years, and he obtained her. The Lord teaches him how he is to be formed in affection, and he came at the end of fourteen years and received her and loved her. In these circumstances of love, Jacob had endured the frost by night, and the heat by day. But he had gone through. There are many brethren who are bearing " the frost by night ", but God kept Jacob in the frost by night and the heat by day. He says to Laban, " Thou hast changed my wages ten times." Have we had our wages changed ten times? It is part of our education. Get alone with God about it. If you feel down, weep :

tears in the presence of God are precious. I assure you. Have you a full heart? Tell God of the sorrow in your soul: let the tears flow. Poor Jacob! Ten times, and the frost and the heat, but he had gone through with God and was sustained.

So, in this remarkable history, circumstances proceed in the making of the prince, in the lifting up from the dunghill. He has to endure all these circumstances. Laban tries to get him to return. Poor Jacob got very little comfort from Laban. We get very little comfort from worldly relatives. God knows the sincerity of the man. The angels of God met him. Jacob says, "This is God's host." God is allowing His host to attend him to assure him that He is with him still. How many times unknown have the angels come near. God is just assuring you that He is with you still. How often we rejoice in having the sense of the angels. Have you ever had an angel attend you? They walk along in the dark beside you; they are ministers. They are sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation. Angels are a suggestion of God's providential care for us. Jacob is still moving on, but a question comes in as to images, false gods. Scripture tells us who brought the idols into the home—Rachel. I wonder how it was that Jacob had so broken down in his headship that his wife had brought idols into the home. Are there any here like Rachel, who hide idols

in the tent? Do you allow the children, on the quiet, to read books that you know the father would not sanction? Is there a Rachel here who is doing that? Poor Jacob! I do not know how he must have felt. You and I may hold our headship, but we may break down. The idols were put away, and so God appeared to him, as I have said, and he was able to move on. I do tell you affectionately if there are any idols in the tent, destroy them. Are there any books on your bookshelf that you would not like the Lord Jesus to read? I have thought when I walked into my home, "If when I turned around I saw the Lord Jesus walking in after me, is there anything there I would not like Him to see?" If you have been foolish and unwise you must act with definiteness.

So that remarkable incident in Jacob's history was past. He would suffer no idol in his house—nothing to displace the blessed God who had appeared to him in Bethel. He moves farther still. He is charged by the Lord to return to his own country, and now the fear of Esau awakens in his soul. The question of meeting Esau suggests the question that has to be faced by every one of us—the question of brotherly relations. Jacob's prayer at this point is very touching: "O God of my father Abraham." Why did he say father? He had learned to obey his father. "The Lord which saidst unto me, 'Return unto thy country and

to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee ' : I am not worthy." This is exercising Jacob's soul. " All the mercies . . . all the truth which thou has showed unto thy servant." Unworthy of it. But there is still this terrible meeting with Esau. He sends messengers and appeals to " my lord Esau ". He accumulates a great gift and sends it, and he keeps the women and children, his eleven sons. The gift is sent on before. All this scheming shows how little Jacob had yet become a prince. A prince has power with God ; he has no need to descend to the level on which Jacob was acting here. Jacob's schemes bring him little relief. Jacob is still troubled and he remains by the brook. And now he sends on the women and children and the remainder of the gift, right over the brook, " and Jacob was left alone ". Now something is going to happen. It is when you are alone that God can work. " There wrestled a man with him until the breaking of day." God intended to bring down that man's will —all that element in me of contriving and working. God will teach you, if you are going to be a prince, that you can do nothing but wait on God. You cling to God and depend on Him alone.

A wrestling went on through that night, and as the day breaks the angel says, " Let me go, for the day breaketh." Jacob's word is, " I will not let thee go except thou bless me." He will wrestle to get the blessing. And the angel

touched—a beautiful word—there was no hard wrench of the thigh joint. Have you ever known God to touch you? It is not a terrible blow: it is only a touch. And the angel—it was God Himself, no doubt, in the person of the angel—" touched the hollow of his thigh." His thigh was out of joint and he was now a cripple, no more strength to resist. All Jacob wanted now was, " I will not let thee go except thou bless me." And he blessed him there. Then the word came to him, " Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men." He had reached the elevation now. The word Israel means one who rules with God, and that is the point where this man who is lifted up from the dunghill is made a prince.

He went up to Bethel again, and you will notice the passage says, after that, " they journeyed "; showing that it is a prince moving forward, one whom God has raised up from the dunghill to be a prince. That is how God is working with us in order that He may set us among princes.

So I had in mind to allude to the seventh of Numbers, for there came a moment in God's ways when these persons named as the princes come forward with their offerings. They have great spiritual wealth, typically speaking. There seems to have been no definite word in connection with their offering. Moses did not know

what to do with it : he went to God. Are you concerned about the service of the sanctuary ? Are you a prince ; have you brought a wagon ? A beautiful touch is suggested as to two princes sharing a wagon. You will never lose the sense that you are a brother when you are a prince. Moses takes them and apportions them with remarkable skill : two for the sons of Gershom and four for the sons of Merari. The Kohathites had to bear all theirs on their shoulders. As rising up to be a prince, you will let everything else go by until you get hold of these wonderful thoughts of God.

How different these princes are from " beggars on the dunghill ". They have wealth and move together, having reached, speaking in the language of the antitype, a similar knowledge of God and of Christ. They offer for the performance of the service of the tent of meeting and for the dedication of the altar. What a privilege to offer after this sort !

It says in Numbers vii., " When Moses was gone into the tabernacle of the congregation to speak with Him, then he heard the voice of One speaking to him from off the mercy-seat, at was upon the ark of testimony ; from between the two cherubim. And he spake unto Him." If this offering, to which I have referred, is taking place amongst us, we shall get divine communications. He will speak to us. In the assemblies, when there is the offering, there should be with us the expectancy

that the voice will speak to us. He will speak to us and give us wonderful divine communications from the sanctuary, which in their sacredness and blessedness cannot be equalled in the world.

May the Lord grant that we may set the desire before our hearts that we are as those who are lifted up from the dunghill and set among princes.

Toronto

IX

RESTFULNESS IN THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST

GEN. xlv. 1-8

WHAT I desire to refer to in speaking of this passage of Scripture is the need for restfulness in having to do with the Lord. I am not now referring quite to our side of matters ; it is desirable indeed that we should be at rest in drawing near to the Lord ; but what I have rather more in mind is His drawing near to us ; and with that in view I have referred to this incident in Joseph's history.

I do not think that we perhaps value as we should the intensity of the Lord's desires to be with us, and to have us at home with Him. I am not speaking exclusively of the occasion of the Lord's Supper when the Lord Jesus may come to His people, when He may come to the assembled saints ; but I am speaking of the occasions when the Lord manifestly draws near His people in order to speak to them, and I am convinced that all will agree that the gain of the Lord's address to us is not possible if we are not at home with Him.

Now how wonderful it is that there are emotions, deep, measureless emotions in the heart of Jesus towards us ; think of that, think

of the Personage as typified in Joseph. You might have said Joseph has enough to satisfy him in Egypt, look at the pomp and splendour surrounding his place in the court, think of the eminence on which he is as the saviour of the life of the world and the revealer of secrets ; but these were more or less official positions, dignities which invested him ; and one might speak of the place of glory in which Jesus is in heaven ; He has a glory in heaven surpassing the accumulated glory of all others, that is the glory which rests upon His brow in heaven, the once crucified, despised and hated Man—what a place ! He has dignities investing Him. He has official glories in that place of light superb. You might say, " Lord Jesus, these are enough to satisfy Thee." No. What about these few shepherds who had come out of the land of Egypt ? That was where Joseph's heart lay ; they were his brethren. Christ has in heaven glories, yet there are affections in that wonderful heart that can only be satisfied in having our companionship ; what a wondrous consideration that is.

The arrival of the brethren of Joseph as he looked on them stirred the emotions of his heart, so that he had to cry, " Cause every man to go out." The ministry of the truth in the power of the Spirit from Christ in glory has in view to cause these elements in us, elements of the flesh, to go out. Now the question is, is every man going out ? All that

belongs to us as of this world is a distinct hindrance to the manifestation of Christ amongst His people. One Egyptian remaining there would have restrained the intense emotions of the heart of Joseph.

Now the ministry of the truth which we have received—many of us for many years—is, in the Lord's mind, to the intent that every man should go out. Now have we heard that voice of power, " Cause every man to go out " ? That was the command from the lips of Joseph. It was not a question now of disapproval of these elements, of these persons ; it was that there were such intense emotions in the heart of Joseph that the presence of Egyptians, the presence of persons who were unsympathetic, would have restrained them, would have hindered him, and so he gave this command, " Cause every man to go out."

Now are we prepared to disallow the flesh —are we prepared for that ? " Cause every man to go out." It is a searching question, beloved brethren. I feel it deeply for myself, because the element of the world which is in us and clings to us interferes with what the Lord desires to do ; He desires to make Himself known to us. What a thing that this great and exalted Personage desires to make Himself known. He is not seeking the courts of the world, He is not knocking at any palace doors, He is knocking at the doors of our hearts, and He says, " Cause every man to go out."

They went out, and the pent-up emotions of the heart of Joseph found an outlet in loud weeping—weeping of intense emotion, intense joy, and I think one has discerned the evidences of the Lord's intense emotions as having liberty to come among His people. You may say, "I know nothing about that." There is a reason for that. This priceless joy which is within the reach of every believer is only known at the cost of surrender, and if we are harbouring and clinging to what belongs to us as in the flesh, clinging to what we may be naturally, whether it be in talents, or attainments, or social rank in this world, it is a hindrance to the most wonderful joy that believers here can ever know, the manifestation of the Lord Jesus in the intensity of His love for His own. That is what He is seeking for in the assembly.

You understand now that I am speaking of movements on the Lord's side towards us, and not of movements on our side towards Him. The emotions of the heart of Christ are so precious that they cannot be divulged in the presence of Egyptians, so He says, "Cause every man to go out." He gave vent to his love in loud weeping, and the Egyptians heard and the house of Pharaoh heard; and it is not saying too much to say that this world has heard the joy that is known in the assembly, has known that such a thing is; it may have no intelligence in regard to it, but the thing is known, it has had its effect in the world.

Now that is the move on the part of Joseph to make himself known ; the Egyptians have been disposed of—they have gone out. We are walking in a path of separation from the world, I hope ; if not, it is high time to begin, and it is not too late to begin. The cleavage between us and the world must be absolute in heart. The taking of the Lord's Supper, if it be understood, is an avowal publicly, that Jesus is our Lord ; that is the meaning of the Lord's Supper ; it is the Lord's Supper. All of us here who are the Lord's have passed very definitely from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of the Son of God's love. Supposing I went over to France and petitioned the authorities that I desired now henceforth to be a citizen of the French Republic. I renounce every right here, and I take some steps to avow my allegiance to that Government. Now the crossing over from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of the Son of God's love is as real as that, and more so. Have we passed over ? On the Lord's Day we eat that bread and we drink of that cup as a definite avowal that Jesus is Lord, and the days that follow are to be in correspondence with that ; otherwise the situation is dishonest—it is unreal.

So we have caused the Egyptians to go out, I trust. Joseph discovers now that there is another element to be dealt with. It says here, " His brethren could not answer him, for they were troubled at his presence." Now, why is

it that the Spirit of God is quenched in the assembly of God? I am not speaking now of His being grieved—a most effecting consideration: think of a divine Person being grieved; I am not speaking of His being grieved—I am speaking of His being quenched.

We were speaking this afternoon of certain manifestations of the Spirit that take place in the assembly of God in relation to the body of Christ. When the Lord manifests Himself in the way of ministry, or in the way of His presence as coming among us, there are occasions when those who are there are troubled. I suppose we all know what it is to have sat uneasily during an address; sometimes a word of ministry causes uneasiness. Why? If the Lord speaks, if He speaks in a voice of thunder, we are not disturbed unless there be some secret question there that has never been touched. Is this condition of things obtaining among us, beloved brethren? Do allow me to talk plainly and affectionately. Are any troubled at His presence? Have you a good conscience? Are you silent in the assembly? That is abnormal. The Lord's desire is that all should come near to Him, and the Lord's voice is heard in the assembly in the way of ministry, or He may pursue His own ends by the Holy Ghost in a manifestation. The Lord speaks in a remarkable way on occasions to His people. But He does it for what? So that all distance may be removed.

I am greatly exercised as to why there are certain who appear to take no part in the functioning of the assembly. This is a condition of things that should not be. In the type, Joseph desired that all the brothers should be free with him, and I am sure that his heart was deeply moved as he felt that they were troubled at his presence. One desires to speak with due care, and reverently, of the Lord. What must He feel when He finds us troubled at His presence? You ask a brother in the assembly when you can get near enough to him so as not to wound his spirit, and you say, "My dear brother, why do you never take part in the assembly?" The usual answer is, "I am not free." Why is that? I believe every one should be free to function in the assembly; every sister should be free in her sphere; the young sisters should be free—they should be holy women. There should be a difference between them and the women of the world, as light is from darkness. The fact is the elements of the world have got in among the people of God, and we must cause the Egyptian to go out; that is what must be done. Think of people coming into the assembly, and you do not know them from people of the world. Dear brethren, let me say, in all love and gentleness, these things ought not so to be.

Why should we imitate the fashions of the world? Why not imitate the fashions of

heaven. That is where we belong, and in demeanour and dress we want to bear the moral marks of heaven, and what is outward is an indication of what is inward. Now what about affection for Christ? We are definitely pledged in love to Him. What about our pledge? What about your body? We were speaking in the afternoon about our bodies being holy. Think of a holy vessel. Think of a holy body in which the emotions of sin are disallowed. Think of a heart devoted absolutely to Christ.

I believe there is a custom in the apostate church, a most terrible imitation of the church, of what is called taking the veil—absolute devotion to Christ. Love calls for that. Could anyone view the cross in all its anguish and desolation without giving a whole heart to Christ? He gave His whole heart to us then; nothing deterred Him—shame and spitting, agony immeasurable. Such was the devotion of Jesus to you. What is the answer, dear brothers? What is the answer to it all?

Now there were in the hearts of the brethren of Joseph deep questions that had never been settled, and I believe there are questions which are not settled in the hearts of the saints. Have you forgiveness of sins? "Oh," you say, "I am breaking bread." I was not asking if you were breaking bread. I asked have you had your sins forgiven? Is the matter really settled? Are you really clear that you are forgiven? Have you got peace with God?

Are you justified? What about being justified? God delivered Jesus for our offences. What a thing to do. Why, it was God against whom I had offended; it was the blessed God against whom I had sinned; it was He against whom my will had risen in repeated opposition; He it was who delivered Jesus for our offences, and He raised Him again for our justification. Have you believed that? "Oh," you say, "I believe Jesus has risen." No, that is not what it says. I have no doubt you believe He is risen. Have you believed that God raised Him for your justification? When that wonderful testimony is believed, God justifies the person. No one justifies himself; it is God that justifieth. As Paul says, "Who is he that condemneth?" The believer is clear from every charge; he is justified, and he has peace with God, and, as having the Holy Spirit, the love of God is shed abroad in his heart.

Now do we know what these things are? Are you justified? Justified means that no charge can be brought against you, neither now nor at any time.

Now what about the dominion of sin? What kind of life are you going to live?

The soul history outlined in the epistle to the Romans is of vast importance in order to give believers restfulness in the presence of the Lord Jesus. The Lord showed unto the disciples His hands. He showed them what He had done; that is the force of showing His hands

(see Luke xxiv. 39). I suppose there is hardly an occasion when the precious death of Christ is before us but we think of what has been secured by Him. He showed unto them His hands—His hands, no doubt marked with the print of the nails—as indicating what He has done.

The effort of the enemy is to rouse all that is natural in me, to do my own will ; that in its essence is sin. But sin's dominion is to be destroyed. We are to pass over from the life of the flesh, living here in the indulgence of the flesh, into life in the power of the Spirit. We are to live unto God now and henceforth ; we are entitled to reckon, to count ourselves to have died unto sin, but alive unto God.

Now this is very practical. You may say I understand the truth ; but that will not do ; the understanding of the truth will only bring condemnation upon the conduct unless there be the pursuit of its way. To understand the truth and yet allow sin to work is a very serious matter. You are not to live any longer in sin.

Now these experiences are typified in the behaviour of Joseph's brethren ; they were troubled ; and there are those now who are troubled ; they are not free. I know I am touching what is practical. We are to be a holy people, we are to walk in righteousness, sin's dominion is to be destroyed in the believer ; otherwise the holding of the truth is of no value and we shall come under the discipline of God. If you will not surrender the flesh, and the life

of the flesh, then you will come under discipline in order to bring you to things. Paul says to the Corinthians, "For this cause many are weak and sickly . . . and many sleep."

Now, beloved, the Lord's love is so intense He desires to make Himself known to us, and to make us know that we are His brethren. Think of world bordering; think of persons walking in alliance with the world; think of reading the wretched literature of the world, when the Lord would come to you and say, "I am Jesus." What a word! Do I live unto God? Is it true—is it really true—that I live in the power of the Spirit? How can I have anything to do with this world, save to walk humbly and in a lowly manner through it? Oh, for a heart to love Him more faithfully. Oh, for zeal that would walk in conformity to the light of the truth here, so that one might never be troubled. How wonderful and lovely to hear a brother rise and speak to the Lord—with not a cloud between himself and Christ. Yet I may hear another, you know what I mean, laboured and stumbling. Have you ever been there yourself? One troubled in the presence of Jesus. They were troubled, troubled! Oh, dear brethren, I feel the Lord is speaking to us; would that we might have grace to hear His word: He longs to make Himself known to us. Think of how those men must have felt when they saw Joseph in all his royal apparel, probably the chain of gold about

his neck and the ring upon his hand! Think of the glories of the Son of God, the despised and crucified Man, the exalted, glorified heaven-seated Son of God! and, beloved, what shall we be in heart and life and practice so as to be at home with Him? To be His brethren morally, we must hear the word of God and do it. We shall then be restful in His presence. What were you reading on Saturday? Were you smoking on Saturday? "I am Joseph your brother." Think of the Lord's intense emotions as desiring to be with us, and we have been troubled. He says, "Come near to Me, do not stand afar off; draw near to Me." It is an affecting word.

The Lord would have us, dear brethren, occupy this wonderful position. Joseph said, "I am Joseph your brother." The Lord does not say that to us, but He looks upon us as His brethren of whom He is not ashamed. I have sometimes felt deeply bowed in the sense of that, I know what I am; I know of the smallness and littleness of what I am; but think that I am ranked as one of His brethren. I can speak with holy confidence, He is God blessed for ever, but He would have us at home with Him. The emotions of that heart will never be satisfied until He has us at home with Him. May He bring it to pass for His blessed Name's sake.

Birkenhead

X

VALUATION

LEV. xxvii. 1-8 ; MATT. xi. 2-4, 11 ; MATT. xvi. 13-18; MATT. xxvi. 6-13 ; ACTS ix. 15-16

I WANT to try and show that we are all subject to a divine estimation. It is sometimes said that it matters little how we are valued down here, but I take serious exception to that statement. We ought to be gravely concerned as to how we are valued down here ; it is a matter for grave exercise, or should be, to us all. I do not refer to what the world may think of us. But what I am anxious to arrive at is that we are all set down in the *divine* account. I have an impression that the estimation is written down, and the estimation is the estimation of the priest, and I want your heart to be full of joy in the realisation of the estimation. I am sure every one here will value it much that they have an estimation according to the ability of the Lord to value ; and I believe that one's estimation among the brethren should correspond with the Lord's estimation of them. Many of us are estimated by others a great deal too highly : some of us are perhaps undervalued ; but we are to think soberly, dear brethren, the apostle says. Sometimes a brother will say, " Well, I am a poor thing,

I am no good" ; and I sometimes wonder whether he really believes what he says. We are to think soberly, wisely ; and we should covet to be near enough to the Lord and sufficiently often in the holiest, in the sanctuary, to know what the Lord's estimation is.

Now in the last chapter of Leviticus we have the matter of estimation according to God and estimation according to the valuation of the priest, and doubtless you have noticed in reading the passage that the valuation of the male differs from that of the female. At your leisure it will interest you to note the difference between the valuations ; they are not regular. According to age, the valuation of the male and the female differs, and I believe the spiritual meaning of the valuation of the male and the female suggests for us the valuation according to what we are according to divine purpose and the valuation according to what we are in God's ways here and the measure of what is actually wrought in us, what is entered into by us. You might say to me that every one is valued alike ; well, every one stands in divine favour and stands before God in divine righteousness ; all stand in the blessedness of what Christ is as risen. But you must understand that when it comes to be a question of the world to come, and possibly eternity, there are variations. For instance, when one thinks of the apostle Paul, the great place that he has in relation to the divine structure, one will

readily conceive that he has a distinctive place in valuation, even in relation to the ways of God on earth, and the assembly of God. But speaking of matters in the main, the valuation of the male and female has respect to the place divinely given to us according to the purpose of God and the place we have in relation to the formation wrought here in us in the power of the Spirit ; and the valuation all through in the male is higher, showing that the place we have in the divine reckoning and the estimation in respect to the place divinely given according to purpose and counsel is always higher than anything we have reached here.

So I want you to understand the blessedness of what it is to view ourselves as taken up before ever the world began in the purpose and counsel of God and the place given to us in that connection. Things are not done in any sense by the Lord in estimation as we should say by guesswork. I have seen men estimating here on earth, and they run their eye over a building and say, so much. The Lord never does a thing like that. The estimation is accurate, and the estimation is according to the shekel of the sanctuary ; it is God's estimation. I want you to think that the Lord has estimated you, and He knows your value. He knows exactly the place that was given you according to purpose, chosen of God in Christ, and the place that you will have in the divine structure, and He knows, too, your actual state, what has

been formed in you. There is an estimation from five years old. Think of a young convert, a boy or girl converted yesterday ; they were the subjects of divine purpose before ever the world began, and the Lord estimates them according to that, and He estimates them also according to the work that is actually there. You may say it is faith that is there. It may be a very simple faith ; but because a person is only recently converted it does not follow that the measure of faith is small. On the contrary, in a person recently converted often the faith is wonderful. Never discredit what is in a young person because they are young. I have often thought that I would have given anything to see older persons with the faith of a little child. I dare say you have noted in a child a most extraordinary faith, so that you must never underestimate the young people ; always try to remember that they have been estimated according to the estimation of the priest. So that we as brothers and sisters in the assembly of God would do well to become intimate with the sanctuary, be much in the presence of the Lord. Somebody said once, " What a wonderful thing for the priest to have access to the holy place." I remember saying to a clergyman once in a railway train, " It must be a wonderful thing to be a priest " ; and he looked at me and said, " Indeed, it is." I said, " It must be a wonderful thing to be able to go into the presence of the Lord."

And he looked at me with the utmost astonishment and said, "I am afraid I do not know much about that!" Are you accustomed to the sanctuary? Do you know what it is to go in and speak intimately with the Lord who is the great Priest in the house? What an indescribable something there is about such people. I do not know any human language to describe it—persons who are intimate with the holy place so that you have some sense of His estimation of you. It is a very sobering thing.

Now God may have to resort to a sign in order, perhaps, to give a sense of the estimation. You remember that the heads of the tribes of Israel had to lay up their rods before Jehovah, after the rebellion of Korah and his company, and the word was that God would speak to the man whose rod budded. Now what is the estimation? You recall how they had to come and take their rods. Think of coming and finding your rod just as it was before—no buds, no blossom, no almonds on it. But God showed by whom He was going to speak, it was Aaron; and there are times when you and I have to lay up our rods and learn that God is not going to speak by us. What is His estimation of me on this occasion—not last week, but now? It must be a living thing, and it will impart great power to us in the house of God as knowing what the divine estimation is. It matters little what people think of you in the

world, although I would like people to think that this is a man who wears the breastplate of righteousness. I frequently hear it said, "There is something about that person that I cannot understand." A brother was in conversation with a man of the world when another brother came into the office and, seeing there was an interview going on, he retired; and the worldly man said to the brother, "That is an extraordinary sort of man. I feel that man is a holy sort of man." Would you like to bear priestly garments like that? He was in moral accord with the estimation. Now that is what I would like, and that is what we must covet—we must covet this. Difficulties come in, Paul says, "That those that are approved." It is approval we need; it is sweeter than anything. I need the Lord's estimation, and I do not believe that the scripture would justify that the estimation is unvarying, for I believe it may vary. The place given to us according to the purpose and counsel of God does not vary, but the estimation according to what we are here in our growth practically may greatly vary. Are you exercised about the word of God with you and in you? Does it ever cause you any concern? What are you doing? How are you shaping your course? How are you occupying yourself with a view to divine working? What about the vessel in the hands of the potter? Do you ever think about it? What is the use of getting

up in the morning and getting through the day anyhow? I understand that life is an arena where God is preparing a vessel. Have you ever been through a pottery? How remarkable are the processes the clay goes through till at last it stands a thing of beauty, perfect symmetry. What has done it all? Working has done it. How I have watched the people of God until, seeing some going home, I have seen a vessel of mercy prepared for glory. It matters little what happens to you down here as long as we are being prepared so that the estimation of the priest may set us down at the value that will please Him and be more truly in accord with God having taken you up.

You may say, "I do not know why it is that at the close of my life I seem to have nothing but sorrow." Shall I tell you why it is? There is a vessel being prepared for glory. Oh, the loveliness of a vessel when prepared; I do not think there is anything more exquisite on earth than a vessel ready to go—prepared for glory. The estimation of the priest may be fifty shekels according to the shekel of the sanctuary. That is what the Lord is doing with us, and the thing is to be near enough to Him. My dear brother, how often do you speak to the Lord? Do you have morning reading? Is that the only time you speak to Him? In the evening when you kneel down and close your eyes before you sleep, is that all? No one loves your company like Jesus.

Do you think He misses it? He might say, "He never speaks to Me unless he is in need." It is rather painful when a friend has to say to you, "When was the last time you came to see me?" "Well, let me see, it was when I was in trouble." Would the Lord have to say, "You never come to sit down under My shadow with great delight." And being with Him would give us a sense of the estimation.

I want to show you first of all the estimation of the Lord of a *convert*, and I refer to Paul, or, as he was then, Saul; he was a convert. And Ananias was not prepared to give him any value at all. He said, "I have heard by many of this man." Now reports are always dangerous, brethren; never go by reports. "I have heard," he says, but the Lord will not accept that. The Lord judges by what He knows, not by what He hears, and it is not a safe thing to be guided by reports. The Lord's estimation of this young man, Saul, is exceedingly beautiful, "Go thy way; for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel." He was a chosen vessel, the great apostle to the Gentiles, and the one through whom the truth of the mystery was to come out and the word of God was to be completed; but, nevertheless, such was the character of Saul's conversion that the estimation of the man is, "He is a chosen vessel unto me." Now I want you to understand that every

young convert is not necessarily a chosen vessel in *that* sense ; but, nevertheless, every one *is* a definite choice of the Lord. What are you going to say to a person if the Lord has chosen him? What are you going to do with a brother or sister converted yesterday if the Lord has chosen him? It alters the place a person has in my thoughts at once when I regard the estimation of the priest, the valuation. That person, although he may have fled in dire need to the Lord, yet He has chosen him. He may be a tiny vessel as compared with the great vessel, but a vessel nevertheless, and that is the Lord's estimation and valuation, and we should never value anyone at a less valuation than that. Have you ever thought of your child? You say, " He loves the Lord." Well, thank God he does. Would you like to look at your boy and feel that he is chosen, the Lord has taken him up, that is His valuation of him. You say, " He is only a little fellow, just converted." Yes, but he has been taken up, chosen of the Lord. " A chosen vessel unto me." You will regard your child very differently if you can regard him in that light. Now, how are you going to frame your child's life in future? What do you want him to be? A Bachelor of Science? What for? He is " A chosen vessel unto me." Do we care for our children, and bring them up ever having that in mind? What did Hannah do? She said, " I will give

him to the Lord." Have we done that with our children? "A chosen vessel"—that is the valuation, the Lord's valuation, the estimation of the priest; and to you, my dear little boy, if you should be here, and if you know and love the Lord, I want you to understand that this great Personage has put out His hand and chosen you as a vessel to be for Him—that is the valuation. "Let no one despise thy youth," said Paul to Timothy. He had some sense of the valuation of the priest.

Now I want to go on from that to speak a word with regard to the valuation of the *disciple*. In Matthew, chapter xvi., it says with regard to the visit to Cæsarea Philippi that the Lord was with His disciples, not the apostles, they were that, but disciples; and He begins to inquire, "Whom do men say that I . . . am?" What is their valuation of Him? I do not know how you regard the world, I do not want to speak disrespectfully of the world at all, but when I think of the poor ability of the world to value what is great I am not attracted to the world at all. The princes of the world did not know the Lord of Glory, and they crucified Him. That has stamped the world for ever as a community that cannot be trusted, and I am not going to accept their judgment for a moment. Now the Lord says, "Whom do men say that I . . . am?" Well, John the Baptist risen again. They are all in the dark, you see. Ask the men of the world about

Christ, the Holy One of God—think of the infamous blasphemies! Young man, are you looking to the world for judgment and wisdom? You will never find it there. What is the valuation of our Lord? Now as to choosing your friends, are you going to choose friends who have undervalued the Lord? I will not be seen in their company, I will not have anything to do with people who have undervalued the Son of God; they are not my company, and I am sure I am not theirs. So the Lord goes on, "But whom say ye that I am?" Now Peter has been sovereignly taken up by the Lord. I admit that this is special to Peter, but the principle of the thing is the same. Now the Lord says, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." Now that is the Lord's estimation of a disciple that he was the subject of revelation from the heavens, from the Father. That is special to Peter. There is no such revelation to anyone now—the revelation is complete; but the principle of the thing remains that to a disciple there may be given light with regard to the revelation, and that is possible to us all, for the thing comes into our souls in the way of light, and you may have the light of the glory of that Person. So the Lord says, "Blessed art thou Simon Bar-jona." What an honour for that fisherman. "Blessed art thou." Would you like the Lord to say that to you? He has

said it of you, for He said to Thomas, " Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." You are blessed in His view. Think of the Lord saying you are blessed. Have you ever put that down close to your heart, " He has said that I am blessed." That is His valuation of you as a disciple, one that has got a heart open to get light from heaven. If ever there was a day when we do need to have light from heaven it is now. There is marvellous ministry given in the church, but there is something more than that, and that is, light from heaven for yourself. I do not discredit one word that has been spoken and written for a minute, for I value it all immensely ; but there is something greater, and that is to get a ray of light for yourself, and you can have it, and the Lord's word with reference to one who has it is, " Blessed art thou."

Well, now, I just want to say one word with reference to the Lord's valuation of a *sister*. I refer to the woman in the house of Simon the leper. She brought the alabaster box of very precious ointment and put it on the head of Jesus and anointed Him ; and there was a dispute about it—the ointment should have been sold, and it was a waste, and so on. Now the Lord says that His estimation of her is that " She hath wrought a good work." " She hath done what she could " (Mark xiv. 6, 8). He so valued what was done that He said that wherever the gospel is preached this would be

told for a memorial. Think of that woman having a memorial in this world. That woman's act has come up in the assemblies as a memorial all over the world. If you go to Sydney and ask the brethren there if they have ever heard about that woman, they will say, "Yes, we often speak of her." Ask the brethren in South Africa or in New York. I have been through parts of Europe, and in every meeting I have been they know about her. My dear sister, would you not like to have a valuation like that? But you cannot have *that* one; *she* has got it. But what is the priest's valuation of you? Supposing the Lord were to come right down here, would you like Him to tell us His valuation of you? You say, "No, I would not." Well, He will not; but He knows. What is your life? Is it laid at His feet? Can you think of what He has suffered for you and not put your life at His feet? Would you like to go straight to heaven and put your head down at His feet and put your whole soul's homage at His blessed feet? May the Lord work in us that there may be a valuation of us that is more worthy of the priest. Some of you young people would like to have some letters after your name; you would like to be something in this world. It is not worth being anything in this world where your Saviour only had a cross and grave. Be something in God's world; have an estimation at the mouth of the priest, and nothing can take its place.

Just briefly, for a moment, I want to speak of John the Baptist as the Lord's valuation of a *servant* in Matthew xi. Now John was shut up in prison, and it says that he heard of Christ in the prison. It would appear that for a moment John's better judgment was swayed by what he heard. So the Lord gives a wonderful guide as to confirming a judgment. " Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see." I do not think we are to be much governed by things we hear unless there is something to see. Reports are sometimes dangerous. Every report must be borne out by something that can be seen ; so the Lord says to the disciples, " Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see : the blind receive their sight . . ." And then the Lord runs over what has happened ; He knows perfectly well that John will not doubt for a moment. I am certain that John never wavered for an instant ; he knew who had come. Now the Lord gives in the hearing of those about Him the valuation of John, and He says, " Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist." You might say John was very low down when he did not believe in the prison that the Lord had come. Now what are you going to do with a brother like that ? Well, you say, " That is a very poor brother." The Lord's valuation of him according to the estimation of the priest, according to the shekel

of the sanctuary, is that " Among them that were born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist." That is, in that order of service, in that dispensation, as having regard to the bringing in of the Lord ; and, moreover, He says, quoting scripture in reference to him from Malachi iii., " Behold . . . my messenger . . ." In prison ? Yes, but " my messenger ". Now that is a very serious thing for this world. I am afraid we do not perhaps realise what a serious position this world is in. " My servant " has been put in prison in this world by the hands of the political power and He Himself has been crucified and slain. That is what this world has done, and there is a day of reckoning coming for this world yet. I want you to feel that while you may pray for the salvation of poor sinners in the world there is a line of demarcation between ourselves and the world that no one can overlook.

I wonder if there is any one here who is not converted. You belong to this world that put the Lord's messenger in prison and crucified the Lord of Glory. If there is any one here unconverted I beg you to flee for your life ; turn to Christ immediately ; do not let another sun set over your head ; flee as if your whole life depended upon it, and accept the Lord Jesus as your Saviour, and believe in Him and confess Him, and you will be free of this world, and you will have the valuation of a

new convert ; you are chosen and taken up by Him. Here is the valuation of a servant. I question if John ever heard it. It is a wonderful estimation. He says, nevertheless, " Notwithstanding, he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." He belongs to another dispensation altogether, but that does not disallow the great place that John had in the Lord's valuation as a servant. And that is where we fail, beloved brethren, in our service ; we may waver, for we are but poor weak men, but our service will always be valued at its highest possible estimation according to the estimation of the priest. I want nothing more than that. If I can only have a valuation from Him and the estimation from His mouth, and hear Him say one day (great though the sense of weakness is in regard to all our service), " Well done, good and faithful servant." That is the valuation of the priest, for every man shall have praise of God.

May the Lord keep our souls in the sense of it for His Name's sake.

Marlow

XI

DEATH OR LIFE

Gospel Address

1 Tim. v. 6; Mark v. 41; Luke vii. 14; John xi. 41-43.

I READ the verse in Paul's first epistle to Timothy in order that we might see that apart from His work in them God regards all persons as being morally dead while actually living. This may possibly be new to some who are here, although it should not be new to any one in any way acquainted with christian truth. The apostle Paul, in writing to the saints at Ephesus, speaks of the persons who formed that local assembly as having been dead in trespasses and sins. And I believe the Lord would have me lay this matter before you this evening with regard to some of our number here that while you are literally living yet you are morally dead, though you are not aware of it. The awful fact has never been understood by you, or you would have been converted long ago. Maybe there are some here children in a family. I see many such here. You may be like the little girl in the house of Jairus. Jairus was a man who knew the Lord and was able to speak to Him; so possibly is the case with your father. Your father and mother know the

Lord, but you do not know Him. You may be dead while you are living—no thought about your need, no desire whatever to know the Saviour, no interest at all in divine things, no fear of death, no fear of eternity, no desire to be with Christ where He is : dead while you are living.

You are not concerned, but your father is. Possibly he has been speaking to the Lord about you, perhaps he has spent some hour or two on his knees speaking to the Lord about you. Yet he may not understand that the need is as bad as it is. You, fathers, do you realise that your children are dead while they are living ? Oh, that there was a great stir in the hearts of parents for their children. You may rejoice that they are your children, but you are responsible for them. A brother may say, " Oh, yes, my children will be blessed all in good time." When is good time ? Who are you to say they will be blessed in God's time ? When is the day of salvation ? " *Now* is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation." As parents we should wait on the Lord that He will draw near to our children now. I would ask the fathers here : Are your children dead while they are living ? Have you ever had a dead child ? That boy or girl, buoyant in their youth, dead while they are living, not a move there. They were born lost, and in death. Dead Godward while they are living in sins ! How we need to wait on God for our children !

Jairus was a man who felt the circumstances deeply. There was an interruption, but he held on. I ask you, fathers—what about your children, and you, mothers, in the home? Is the little girl perhaps playing about in childhood, growing up into maidenhood, dead while she lives? Terrible thing to have a dead child! —no response Godward, no real divine interest in Jesus, in God, in heaven. Are there some of you young people like this? The Lord answered Jairus and He came to the house, and there were those there mourning. But there was no reality about it. Never let there be anything unreal with us. God will have nothing to do with what is unreal; and if we have what is unreal in our homes and meetings the Lord will put it all out before He works. Let us pray that we may never have anything that is unreal. Let us be pure and holy before God and the Lord can work amongst us. Then He put them all out—the Lord will not have what is unreal. If you do not feel the need, do not say that you feel it. Be honest, be true with the Lord. The Lord cherishes family relationships, He loves them. He knows what is in your heart as a father. No one knows it like the Lord, and the Lord will bring the brother in as well.

There is many a father and mother to-day that are groaning because they are not prepared to have the brethren in their homes and to have the people of God moving with the

Lord with a view to the blessing of the children. But the Lord takes the father and mother and Peter, James, and John with Him. The father now is awakened, he knows the child is dead. I ask you, my beloved sisters in the Lord, do you realise that the child you have borne, do you know the child is dead? Keep it before you, the child is dead while it lives. No one on earth can reach it but the Son of God. He can reach it. There is a voice that can be heard in the domain of death. He feels for the child—the Son of God that can come in and speak so that death hears the might of His voice. He has the heart to feel for a little child. If you are a little child in a christian home, will you allow the Lord Jesus to take you by the hand? If you will just allow Him to take you by the hand He will say, "Damsel, I say unto thee, arise." Would you like to arise and come out of death and live to the glory of God? You are living perhaps in the world's gaiety, fashion, and folly. You know nothing yet of the evil of it. You may scorn to think of loathsome wickedness. But the Lord Jesus comes near to you to-day, and He wants to take your hand. And He will say, "Arise," get up. Let the Saviour take your hand. Hear His voice when He says unto you, "Damsel, I say unto thee, arise." Would you like your child to be lifted out of death? I appeal to you as a father, you love your child. It is most touching to talk to a father about his child.

I have conversed with men able to grasp great matters and I have been amazed at the tenderness of a father as to his child.

The Saviour is, as it were, passing along, and He speaks to you through me—a great honour that I should be allowed to speak to you at His behest. He says, " Damsel, arise." It may be the last word. I pray you let Him take your hand and lift you up into life, and happiness, and joy. It is said of the girl, she " arose and walked ". Thank God there are some here I see who some while ago realised that the Saviour took them by the hand, lifted them up, and they are walking. Move on, follow Him, lay your life as a tribute at His feet. I have nothing to give to Christ but my life ; He is worthy of it all. Arise and walk.

In Luke we have another incident. There it is of a *man* who was dead. A young man, the only son of his mother, and she a widow, was being borne out to the burial. You may not have noticed that there were bearers here. " They that bare him stood still." Some of you young men may be in the hands of bearers. You may have come under influences that are bearing you out, and presently you will be buried in the world. You are being borne by these things ; companions you have been associated with, they are as bearers bearing you along. You may be a youth at school. Instead of choosing companions that will help you in the highway of righteousness, in the

path of life, you have allowed yourself to be influenced by companions who are doubtful. They are bearing you away. Often, those who go astray begin to go astray in schooldays. There are wicked things done in schooldays. And boys and lads are being borne out for burying. There is many a lost lad in Canada, and many a lost lad in the United States. I read an account of a young man who had been in a christian home. He had drifted away. Evil companions had gradually led him astray, and I warn you against companions, they will bear you out for burying. [In my early days I was thrown in the company of men who did all they could to lead me astray.] This young man was in a low, wretched place in New York, and he lay dying, and only two words escaped his lips. He muttered the words, " A lost laddie ", and he died—borne away to the burying. If there are any being borne away, remember there is One who calls you to hesitate, to halt, and He says, " Arise." Will you hear His word ? " He that was dead sat up and began to speak." Oh that His voice may reach you ! It is sorrowful to think that there may be some boys that have grown up in christian homes, borne away to the burying.

If I could tell you all that is in my heart—I have seen some near and dear to me who have been borne away into the terrible vortex of this world. I assure you it is a serious thing

to be borne away to the burying. Before that hour shall come to any here, the Lord, by me, appeals and says, "Arise." Throw up the yoke of sin. Cry with all your might to the Lord to help you, and hear His word, young man, that you may get up and begin to speak, and come back to your own mother. Some of you may little know your mother's tears. You little know how she wept at night. Many a mother has cried herself to sleep for a wandering boy.

With regard to Lazarus a further stage is reached. Here is one who is not only dead, but is in corruption. Even his sister says, "Lord, by this time he stinketh." There are some in this place who know nothing of the filth of this world: you know not the loathsomeness of this world. There is a grade of evil into which people pass in which people stink in corruption, and I believe that in Canada it is as bad as it is in England, and in England as bad as it is anywhere else, where people live in wickedness. "By this time he stinketh." That is true of some of us. That is where sin leads us. Sin is not a light matter. I know what I am talking about. Sin is deceitful, and I know it rolls over you with a grasp from which you cannot free yourself. This world is rapidly becoming corrupt and stinking with wickedness and evil. If you pursue the course you are in, you will come to it. Is there anyone here, not only dead, but stinking with sin? What about the secret

things—things no one knows? Remember, a man's body should be a holy vessel, sanctified unto God. A man's mind should be pure. He should never allow filth to stream through his mind. We should be holy.

I know what is happening in the world, and I know what some children of christian parents are doing, and would warn you that you may be in this condition now. "Take away the stone." But the Lord Himself can stand and say, though the case is so desperate, "Lazarus, come forth." Even from such a state you may be delivered. He says, "Lazarus, come forth." You may come forth into life no longer in corruption, and the Lord may say to you brethren, "Loose him, and let him go." May the Lord appeal to some this evening! The case is growing desperate. The Lord has sent me to speak this word to you. Nothing is beyond the power of the Son of God. He that was dead came forth, wearing the grave clothes. That is what the Lord will do for you. Hear it and live—you shall come forth in life. You shall rejoice in the heavenly position and the joy of a holy and a sanctified love.

Hamilton, Ontario

THE END

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